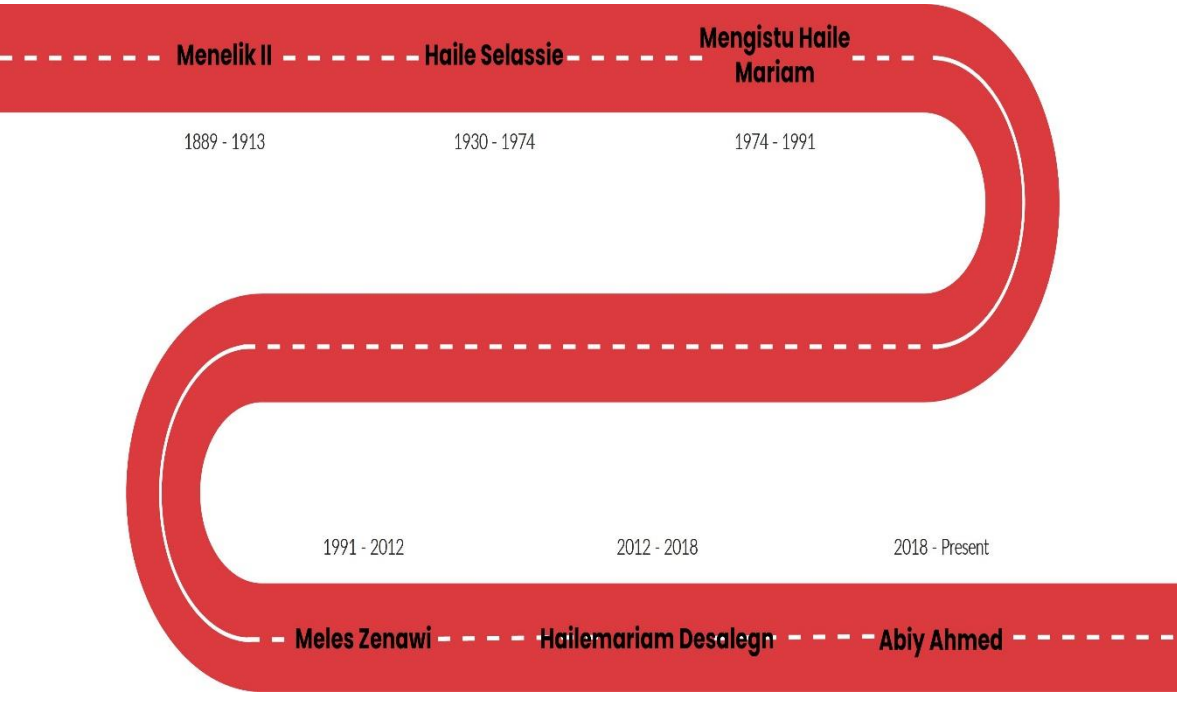
Cries in the Hinterland



Untold Stories of the Somali Region in Ethiopia: 1948 - 2018

AbdiRizak M. Warfa, PhD

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Riverfront Pond Press
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Dedication

To my parents, Aabo Xaaji Maxamed Xaaji Warfa and Hooyo Kaltuumo Aw Cali Farasle, to whom I owe all!

To Fosiya and my kids, with love and admiration!

For Hadraawi and generations of Somali poets whose lines inspired resistance and struggle –

Markii aan garaadaha taariikhda kala guray
Ilaa gogol dhiggiinii, galabtaad is wacateen
Taladan ah in la igalo, Baarliin ku goyseen
Ilaa gooshkan maanta ah, hadimada igaadhiyo
Waxaad geysateen baan, gocasha xasuustee
Maxaan reer Galbeedow godob kaa tirsanayaa?

– Hadraawi

Author's Note

"Soomaliya, Soomaaliya Soomaali baa leh
Soomaaliya, Soomaaliya Soomaali baa leh
...
Diridhaba anaa leh, Xamar iyo Doolo
Godey anaa dega ilaa iyo Gaarisa
Dadka iiga maqan Jigjigan dareemaa
Ma huro Hargeysa... waan u hiiliyaa
Laabtaan ku hayaa hooyo, waan hadal hayaa
...
Laabtaan ku hayaa hooyo, waan hadal hayaa
Dadka iiga maqan Jigjigan dareemaa
Ma huro Hargeysa... waan u hiiliyaa
Laabtaan ku hayaa hooyo, waan hadal hayaa"

— Lyrics from 2021 "Somalia Somali baa leh" song by K'Naan and Sharma Boy, two Somali rappers and musicians

In 1977 when Ethiopia and Somalia went to war over the present-day Somali region, I was a two-year old toddler learning how to walk. Yet, I can vividly recall the sounds of Ethiopian-operated Mig-21s bombing the northern Somali city of Hargeisa which my family lived at the time. I remember constant siren alarms going off as Ethiopia mounted relentless air raids. The Ethiopians used Soviet-built Mig-21s and American F5 warplanes to bomb both Hargeisa and the port city of Berbera. Their bombs were scattered far and wide, mostly causing structural damage. In a single Friday in December 1977, the Somali government reported eight Ethiopian jets attacking Hargeisa and killing at least nine people.

In many ways, the story of the Somali region over the course of my lifetime has been one of conflict and war. The last three years (2018–2021) maybe the only exception—the region currently enjoys relative peace after the main opposition party, the Ogaden National

Liberation Front (ONLF), ceased its arm struggle and signed peace treaty with the Ethiopian government, ending a 24-year-old insurgency. The current regional leadership also took praiseworthy steps, improved freedom of expression, and mostly pursued infrastructure-driven agenda.

Yet, as was true at the turn of the 20th century when Emperor Haile Selassie sought to annex large swaths of Somali territories, from Zeila to the Ogaden, the fate of the region remains ironclad as ever in the hands of Abyssinians from the Ethiopian highlands. The cries in the hinterland remain as loud as ever and the world indifferent as in the past. This begs the question: What is the story of this region?

Photo: Early 1980s Hargeisa pictures of the author and his siblings (from the left: his younger brother Xamse, his older sister Fardowsa and the author on the right, first picture) and his mother (Kaltuumo) and father (Xaaji Maxamed, nicknamed Xaaji Xabeeb). Photo credit: eldest in the family.

Thinking deeply about the Somali Region, I sought to understand the nature of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict and its root causes. As I read widely, I came across stories written about them but not by them. This was odd and contradictory to the stories I grew up listening to during my childhood. As someone who was fortunate to grow up in a household in which poetry and storytelling held special value, I was always aware of the Somali struggle for self-determination and their resilience in the face of unthinkable

adversities. It helped to be in Hargeysa, home of poets whose lyrics inspired generations to resist colonialists of all shades. In what I read, I saw gaps in the stories told about the region or the biased way their stories were told. This book therefore tells untold stories of the Somali region and debunks stories told about the region. The book is also intended as testimony to Somali fortitude in the face of many adversities.

Much of the work in this book is based on original documents I read, archival sources I mined, or stories passed down from elders. My primary sources were original correspondence and historical records kept in relevant British and American historical record offices that became only accessible in the last few years. I also came across records written in Italian and French but since I neither speak nor understand those languages, I could not use them. To some extent I also used written materials of a secondary nature. All this meant I have to rely on the work of many other authors as I told the stories contained in the book. Like many, I provided a complete list of all the references and the work I used to shape my thinking at the end of the book as chapter notes and select bibliography. This is important for those who wish to find the original works but also for curating important documents that discuss the Somali region.

In writing this book, I decided to broke ground with the common practice of anglicizing Somali names when writing in English. Whenever possible, I wrote all names in the way Somalis write their names except when citing documents or other authors' work. I started this practice with the way I spelled the names of my parents in the dedication: Xaaji Maxamed Xaaji Warfa and Kaltuumo Aw Cali Farasle. To help non-Somali readers, a note about Somali orthography is shown just before the introduction chapter.

Then there is the contentious name of the region and what to call it. While my preference in this book is to use "Somali region" and "Somali Regional State (SRS)" interchangeably to describe occupied Somali lands in Ethiopia whenever possible, some of the original documents and archived sources often use the term "Ogaden" to describe the region. In the sense used in this book and the extant literature, *Ogaden* refers to either a historical reference or the geographical location of the region. For example, when discussing Anglo-Ethiopian treaties in the Somali region, the historical documents often use "Ogaden and the reserved Haud." The Ogaden area, as used in these documents, roughly corresponds

to the Somali region zones of *Doolo, Erer, Jarar, Nogob, Qoraxeey*, *Shabelle* and their environs. The reserved Haud areas, as used by colonial powers and in historical documents, refers to areas north of the Ogaden and along the border with the present-day Somaliland and parts of Ethiopia's former Eastern Hararghe and Bali. This designation corresponds to the remaining Somali regional zones of *Sitti, Faafan, Afdheer, Liibaan* and *Daawo*.

Given the history of the Somali region and the historical records discussed, it is inevitable some documents will discuss Somali tribes and clans. While I go into great lengths to avoid discussing clan lineages and focus on the unifying theme of "*Somali*," nevertheless the term "Ogaadeen" is used to distinguish the clan from the geographic area as is done in most historical records.

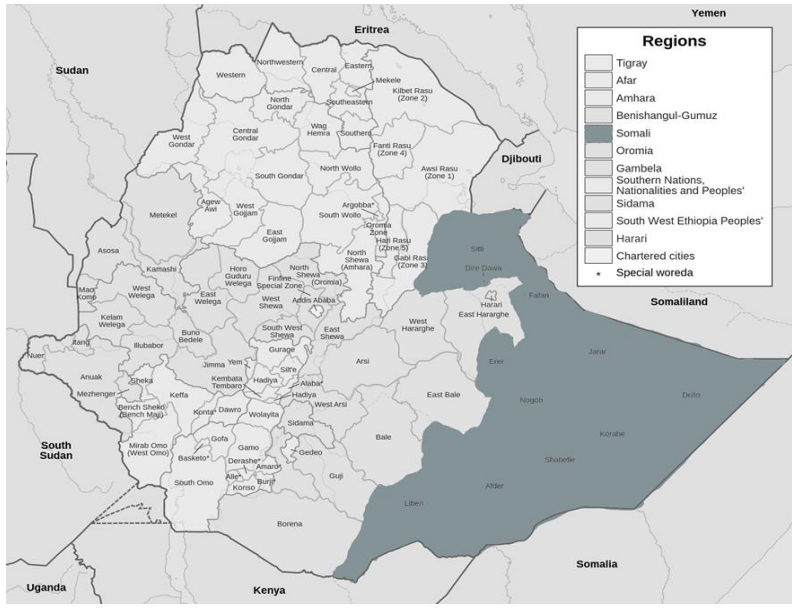
Finally, like the opening lines of this note and those in the dedication to Hadraawi and generations of Somali poets whose poems I admire, I also chose to leave certain "opening lines" in some chapters in their original Somali form. In the end,

All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the-street
Whose buildings grope the sky

— (Adapted from W.H. Auden, British Poet)

Maps and Abbreviations

Map of the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia



Credit: Map created under Creative Commons license (Derivative work: User: SUM1)

Short List of Commonly Used Abbreviations

BMA	British Military Administration
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
SRS	Somali Regional State in Ethiopia; Mostly, SRS is simply referred to as Somali Region. This does not include Somali territories outside of Ethiopia.
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Force
UN	United Nations
UWSLF	United Western Somali Liberation Front

A Note on the name Abyssinia. 'Abyssinia' in this book refers to Ethiopia's historical name, often used to describe the northern and central highlands of present-day Ethiopia, Ethiopian regions mainly dominated by Orthodox Christian Amhara and Tigray who always clash over the fate of the rest of Ethiopia.

Transliteration of Somali Words

As stated in the Author's note, Somali names and certain poets are written in their original Somali version. To do this, the Latin characters adopted by the Somali Republic in 1972 for writing the Somali language is used. There are few consonants in Somali language that do not conform to English. For the reader not acquainted with the Somali orthography, these are: x, c, dh, and kh. For example, Cali Sabiix in Somali is often transcribed into English as Ali Sabih, omitting the [c] at the beginning of the name and replacing [h] with [x]. In this book,

- The letter *x* is used instead of *h* (Ex. *Xaaji* instead of *Haji*)
- The letter *dh* is used instead of *d* (Ex, *Dheg* vs. *Deg*)
- The letter c is used instead of apostrophe or omitting it (Ex. *Cabdi* vs. *Abdi*).
- The letter *kh* is used instead of *k* (Exp. *Khadar* vs. *Kadar*).

To help the readers, here are the names of few towns mentioned in the book and their (alphabetically arranged) Somali/English names.

Somali Name	English Spelling & Variations
Ayshaca	Aisha [Aysha'a]
Cabdiqaadir	Abdikadir [Abdekadir]
Cali Sabiix	Ali Sabih
Dameeray	Dameria [Dameray]
Dhagaxbuur	Degahbur [Degah bur]
Doolo [Doollo]	Dollo
Hargeysa	Hargeisa
Hodayo	Hodaio
Jigjiga	Jigjiga [Jijiga]
Muqdisho	Mogadishu
Qabridahar [Qabridahare; Qabri Dahare]	Kabridahar [Kebridahar; Kebri Dahar; Kebri Dahare
Qamuuda	Qamuda [Kamuda]
Tuli Guuleed	Tuli Guled
Wardheer	Warder

Introduction

> *"They [Ethiopian soldiers] went house-to-house questioning anybody they found.*
>
> *. . .*
>
> *In one home, they came across a young mother with a new-born child being born the previous day. The soldier kicked the mother in the stomach. She screamed, collapsed on the ground, and died.*
>
> *. . .*
>
> *A neighbor went to help her. She was caught by the throat by a soldier, question[ed] about the footprint and shot dead by the soldier.*
>
> *. . .*
>
> *Two men from the village arrived. They were immediately questioned about the ONLF. One of the men answered, denying any connection to the ONLF; at this the soldiers tied his hands together and threw a rope around his neck. They, then pulled on the rope on both the side of the man until he was strangled to death."*
>
> — *A 2007 eye-witness recall of Ethiopian abuse in her village as told to Human Rights Watch*

Over the span of seventy years, from 1948 to 2018, what can only be called 'red terror' reigned supreme in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Throughout it all, successive Ethiopian regimes used coercive measures to exert their power and authority across the region. Being on the periphery, Ethiopian authorities have always pursued nebulous policy towards the region. This has led to silent cries in the hinterland. The root cause of all this can be traced back to the way Ethiopia gained control over the region at the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, the events of late 19th century

between Great Britain and Imperial Ethiopia reveal how the region came under Ethiopian domination.

Following the imperial conquest of 1890s, Great Britain, and Ethiopia signed multiple treaties in the 1940s and 1950s that led to the cessation of the Ogaden—the geographical term most often used to describe the Somali region—and the reserved Haud to Ethiopia. In the years since, Somalis have waged indigenous armed struggle to resist Ethiopian authority and rule. In response, the Ethiopian State waged brutal counter-insurgency that normalized state violence and sought to install authority by force. Examples maybe illustrative here. In the 1930s, Haile Selassie's imperial army often sent military expeditions to extort tribute from the Somali pastoralists in the hinterland rather than establishing governmental institutions. That is, while the European colonialists often built infrastructure and political mechanisms to exert their control, the Ethiopians sought to maintain control through coercive measures. Indeed, Ethiopian soldiers often described their expedition adventures in the Somali region as exacting pain on the Somalis who they viewed as sworn enemies. In the words of one soldier following the looting of Ogadeni village in 1901, as told to Captain R. B. Cobbold of Britain:

> "*Everyone is our enemy and when we have passed from here all these people also will be our enemies.*"

This was hardly surprising to Captain Cobbold who witnessed persistent and indiscriminate looting of the villages in the line of an Ethiopian expedition force he joined. In Tog Faafan, the captain noted the following in his diary:

> Along the Tug Fafan. Yesterday the Commander sent some mounted men to loot a village of the Sheikh Asha; they returned today with much plunder. Fortunately, however, the villagers fled and managed to drive away their camels, but much grain and household utensils besides many sheep and goats had been captured. The Somalis were very indignant about it… It matters not whether these tribes are friendly to the Abyssinians or have behaved themselves and paid the tribute due from them to the King, they are none the less subject to

> plunder as the army has to live on the country through which it passes, whether the tribes be friendly or hostile.

If one were to think this behavior were unique to the Ethiopian State of 19th and 20th century, that could not have been further from the truth. As the opening lines of this chapter show, the punitive measures of the Ethiopian State were not unique to a particular Ethiopian era but the norm throughout Ethiopia's presence in the Somali region. For example, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) pursued the same tactics and policies of the imperial army during their reign in the region (1991-2018). That is, one thing that can be said with certainty is that the political history of the region remained the same over the span of successive Ethiopian regimes, from the imperial era (1890–1974) to the *Derg* (1974–1991) and the TPLF eras. An argument could be had about whether one regime was more brutal than the others, but the overall Ethiopian policy and treatment of Somali people remained consistent.

Ethiopia itself is a country with a long history. Yet, what is '*Ethiopia*' and what was '*Abyssinia*' remains contested in the African historiography of the state. For instance, there is not much mention of 'Ethiopia' in most treaties with Anglo-French-Italo governments as much as is 'Abyssinia' before the 1900s. That being as it may, Ethiopia's pedigree as Africa's only State that thwarted colonial overtures of European powers in Africa belies the 'real Ethiopia' that was in-lock step with European colonialists. As will be shown, Ethiopia was a willing partner in the imperial conquest of the Somali peninsula. Charles L. Geshekter, a scholar of African history and emeritus professor at California State University Chico, put it more eloquently when he wrote:

> 'Abyssinia' survived the imperialist partition of Africa by transforming itself into one of its participants as 'Ethiopia'.

Unfortunately for Somalis, this meant the partitioning forced them to live under a state that could only control them by force. Garaad Makhtal Garaad Daahir, and other notables from the Somali region, will raise this point in a letter to European powers in 1948 while petitioning for the merger of the Somali region with other Somali territories. In their letter, the Garaad and his colleagues wrote:

> The Ogaden is not an integral part of Ethiopia. It is a territory which the Ethiopians have conquered by invasion half a century ago and over which it can exercise authority only by the use of considerable armed forces.
>
> ⋮
>
> We do not want to be under the Ethiopian Government. As we have no voice in their government and know that it is hostile to the Somali Muslim, we have no confidence in their administration of justice.

Charles L. Geshekter, the African historian, described the fate of Somalis in Ethiopia as follows:

> Living on the southeastern frontiers of the Ethiopian empire-state, the Somalis were a national community withing culturally and ecologically constructed boundaries. Although they lacked a centralized, hierarchically organized political structure, the unifying factors of a common language and ethnic origins, Islam, egalitarian legal and political institutions to resolve disputes, and nomadic husbandry as their dominant pattern of existence distinguished the Somali way of life and ethos from that of the feudal Christian states of the Ethiopian highland.

However, despite the unifying factors that "*distinguished the Somali way*" from the "*life and ethos*" of the Ethiopian highlanders, Ethiopian authorities have always laid claim to the region. Yet, the Ethiopians simply treated the Somali region as a buffer and fence that is there to protect it from the dangers of other Somalis. This has led to a prolonged armed resistance and decades-long costly conflict. It remains to be seen if the recent historic peace agreement between the ONLF, the main rebel group in the region, and the government of Ethiopia in 2018 signals a new beginning or just another calm before another turbulent storm.

An important point worth noting here is how the historical roots of the Ogaden conflict led to dramatically different dynamics and politics from that of other Somali territories. Without mincing

words, ever since the European colonialists let Ethiopia join their scramble for the Somali Peninsula in 1890s, Ethiopia succeeded in her assertations over Somali territories. In fact, as we will see, the Europeans went to great lengths for appeasing Ethiopia to satisfy their imperial goals or set score with other rival colonial powers. This often meant sacrificing the Somali region and Somali territories. The Ogaden-Zeila land swap proposed by Britain to Ethiopia as early as 1946 is a classic example of European tendencies to cede lands which they did not own to Ethiopia.

In the Zeila-Ogaden land swap proposal, the British would have acquired the Haud and associated grazing areas in exchange for ceding the port of Zeila, and corridor leading to it, to Ethiopia. While this specific British proposal did not materialize, it does show the length with which the European powers and the imperial government of Ethiopia dealt over Somali territories without the presence or the voices of Somalis. The Somali region became the proverbial sacrificial lamb in imperial politics. As consequences, the lived experiences and the narrative of the Somalis in the Somali region is markedly different from that of the rest of the Somalis in other Somali-inhabited areas in the Horn of Africa.

The Somali region's history can be divided into three broad eras: the era of imperial conquest, lasting from 1890-1948; an era for armed-struggle, lasting from 1948 to 2018, in which inhabitants of the region waged an indigenous armed struggle against Ethiopia; and post-conflict era, from 2018 to the present, in which the trajectory for self-determination and regional autonomy remains elusive.

This book takes a comprehensive look at the historical events that occurred in each era of the region's history in three parts. Part I provides a historical account of the 1897 Rodd mission to Abyssinia and the fateful events of 1948 that led to the cessation of the Ogaden and the reserved areas to Ethiopia. One could argue "*the roots of the present turmoil in the Horn of Africa go back to this period,*" as suggested by David Laitin and Saciid Samatar. Thus, the book opens with a description of the events of 1897 and how the Somali region features into the great scramble for Africa by colonial powers. This is followed by analysis of 1948-1950 events that led to the independence of some Somali territories while placing the Ogaden under Ethiopian administration.

The chapters in Part II examine state violence in response to counterinsurgency efforts against masses that protested Ethiopian authority and claims to the region. As described in detail, such counterinsurgency efforts rarely distinguished between civilians and armed combatants, leading to torture, mass intimidation, burning of villages, and a whole host of noted human rights violations in what can only be described as "State terror."

The chapters in Part III analyze important events which occurred in 2012 and 2018, particularly peace treaties between ONLF and Ethiopia that signaled the end of the armed struggle for self-determination. Again, it remains to be seen if this change presents turning point or continuation of old Ethiopian policy in new clothes—the proverbial 'wolf in sheep's cloth.' What the future holds, and the story of the region, remains as murky as ever.

Part I

Lasting History

1
1897 | Claiming a Land

> "*Collective memory is a means of producing meanings which belong to a political field…Collective memory does not signify facts about the past: it is above all a semantic code for retrieving memories, for making sense out of historical details in direct relation to political legitimacy*"
>
> — Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe, 1993.

The closing of nineteenth century saw various Anglo-Ethiopian concessions over the Somali region. Particularly, the year 1897 was a crucial year that saw Britain cede large parts of the Ogaden to Ethiopia. Ever since, the Ethiopian government stakes its claim to the region on the basis of its treaty with Britain. The main parties who negotiated over the 1897 treaty were Menelik and Sir Rennell Rodd, the First Secretary of British Agency in Cairo, Egypt. Ras Makonnen, father of emperor Haile Selassie, who was at the time the Governor of Harar, helped negotiate with Sir. Rodd.

Several factors led to the 1897 Anglo–Ethiopian treaty. First, the Abyssinian monarchy under Emperor Menelik was at its peak at the end of the century when European powers were scrambling for Africa. A year prior to the 1897 treaty, the Italians, 25,000 soldiers strong, had launched an attack intended to capture and incorporate Ethiopia to their territorial possessions. Menelik defeated resoundingly the invading Italian forces at the battle of Adwa. Some 6,000 Italian soldiers are said to have been killed, about 1,500 wounded, and about 2,000 taken as prisoners of war.

The Italian defeat at Adwa greatly damaged European prestige. It also had the effect of emboldening Menelik. Consequently, the

European powers treated Ethiopia as an equal power. However, long before the 1896 Italian defeat, Emperor Menelik harbored expansionist tendencies and already laid claims over the whole of Somalia. During the great scramble for Africa, for example, when the European powers partitioned amongst themselves all of Africa, Menelik was not an idle onlooker but a willing participant. In fact, the emperor himself informed the Europeans as such, writing in his famous Circular Letter to the European powers on April 10, 1891, a copy of which was published in *La France Militaire* on March 12, 1896:

> *I have not the least intention of remaining a disinterested onlooker if powers from a distance come with the notion of dividing Africa between themselves, Ethiopia [sic] having been, during the course of quite fourteen centuries, an island inhabited by Christians in a sea of pagans*. (Menelik, 1891).

Figure 1. Self-portraits of Emperor Menelik II (left) and Mr. Rennell Rodd (right). Menelik and Rodd negotiated over the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty that ceded the Ogaden and the reserved Haud areas to Ethiopia (Photos obtained via creative common's license).

The mention of 'Christianity' was important. During their 1884-85 Berlin Conference at which the European powers negotiated and formalized claims to territories in Africa, they made an exception for how to deal with Christian powers versus the rest of the world. One consequence of this was the Brussels General Act of 1890, an arms embargo of the day, which permitted so-called 'Christian powers' the

right to import arms while preventing it from the non-Christians. For example, under the Brussels Act, the Somalis were prohibited from importing arms while Ethiopia had unfettered flow of arms to her territory. Russia, France and Italy mainly exported arms to Menelik. According to the late colonial specialist and scholar of Africa, Leo Silberman, at one-point Menelik's imperial army owned 80 Krupp guns, 300,000 rifles, 4,000,000 cartridges and had between 90,000 and 200,000 organized men. By contrast, the only rifles the Somalis owned were illegally obtained via Djibouti from Arab merchants selling them under the table. This had turned the tables in favor of Ethiopia, a 'Christian' state, over its neighboring Muslim countries.

Feeling at the top of his game, and armed to the teeth, Menelik made his conquest intentions clear to the European powers: His territories were to include the Ogaden and the Sudan. In his Circular Letter, he noted:

> *In the East are included the Galla country known as Borani, all the territory of the Arussi* ***up to the Somali country but including the Ogaden province****... Towards the North, the frontier includes* ***the Habr Awal, the Gadabursi*** *and finally arrives at Ambos. Leaving Ambos, the frontier takes in Lake Assal, the province of our ancient vassal Mahamed Anfale (Anfari), hugs the coast and rejoins Arafale.*

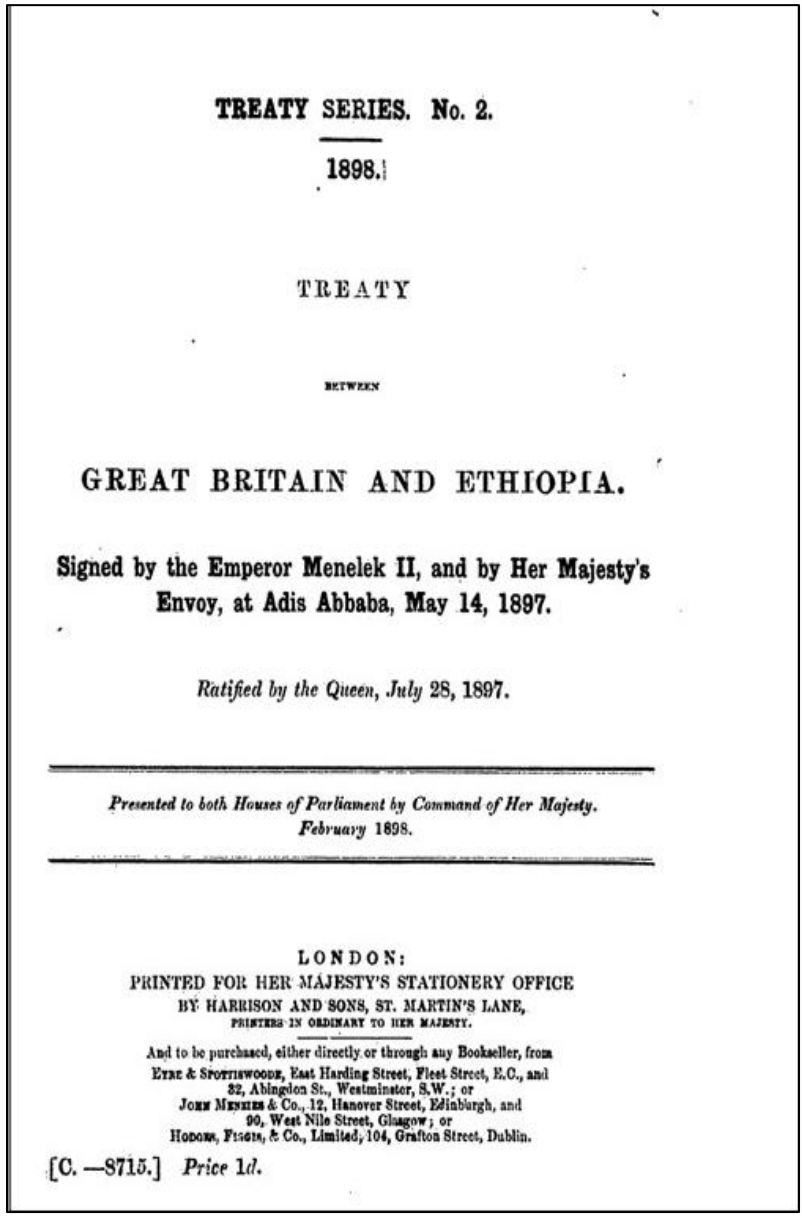
The emperor concluded his letter with the following thoughts:

> *Indicating the present limits of my empire to you today, I shall strive, if God grants me life and strength, to re-establish the former frontiers of Ethiopia* ***as far as Khartoum*** *and down to Nyanza* ***with all Galla country****.*

During his Addis Ababa meeting with Rodd, negotiating over the 1897 treaty, Menelik had declared Somalis as Ethiopian servants who could not have amounted to anything had it not been for Islam. As Rodd wrote in his dispatches, the emperor argued: "*Somalis had been from time immemorial, until the Moslem invasion, the cattle*

keepers of the Ethiopians who could not themselves live in the low countries."

Figure 2. Cover letter of the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty that ceded the Ogaden to Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia



TREATY SERIES. No. 2.

1898.

TREATY

BETWEEN

GREAT BRITAIN AND ETHIOPIA.

Signed by the Emperor Menelek II, and by Her Majesty's Envoy, at Adis Abbaba, May 14, 1897.

Ratified by the Queen, July 28, 1897.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty. February 1898.

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Looking at the demarcation line proposed by Britain, the emperor expounded to Rodd that they were advancing right to the gates of Harar. This was supposed to be an Ethiopian sphere of influence. To Menelik, his empire had suzerainty over all territories from the Indian Ocean to Khartoum. As Rodd reminded him, it was Ethiopia that conquered Harar and established its military garrison just outside the borders of the British Protectorate at the gates of Harar.

Ras Makonnen of Harar was no less ambitious. In his negotiations with Sir Rodd during the 1897 treaty, he too claimed Ethiopian authority over most of the Somali territories, including the city of Hargeisa. Sir Rodd noted in his dispatches to London:

> *The Abyssinians were to some extent, practically in the position of beati possidentes, and, while not actually wishing to risk quarrel, would undoubtedly push on gradually further and further, being the more encouraged to do so by the fact that their former encroachments had met with no material opposition.*

Makonnen demanded the Zeila-Harar corridor to be under Ethiopian administration. Rodd rejected. Makonnen demanded Hargeysa. Rodd rejected it. After all, Hargeysa, as Rodd reminded Makonnen, was a sacred Somali city. It was off-hands. However, throughout the negotiations Rodd was willing to make concessions, including the Ogaden. In his dispatches, he notes:

> *It was obvious that without our being prepared to assert our claims in some more convincing manner than we have hitherto done, or as far as could judge from my instructions, or intend to do, any understanding would be impossible without much larger concessions than I had at first proposed to make.*

Earlier communications from London gave Rodd a wide latitude on making concessions—although he was to ensure that justice and consideration will be accorded, *as if*, to any tribes under the British Protectorate who go under the Ethiopian government. The instructions read:

> *In the event of your finding necessary to agree to the transfer of tribes under British Protection you will be careful to obtain pledges that they will be treated with justice and consideration.*

A year prior, as the events of the great scramble were heating up among the colonialists, Makonnen had protested the British Protectorate setting shop in Hargeysa. In August 1895, he wrote to the British Political Resident in Aden that Hargeisa was in his sphere of influence and that the British were intruding on Ethiopian territories.

Here, it is important to point out that the conquering army of Menelik had reached the gates of the Ogaden when his army took Oromia and Harar. The emperor needed a way to sustain and feed his growing army and the Ogaden offered both fertile grazelands and well-conditioned livestock. His army essentially acted as *Shiftas* and raided the Somali territories consistently. Although there was not much Ethiopian rule to speak off, the Ethiopian army had conducted expansionist conquest of Somali territories as far as Juba and the Webi Shabeli rivers. However, their conquest was band-like grabbing of resources. Nothing more, nothing less. The Somalis noted as much in appeal to the British in 1897:

> *We quiver under the oppression of the Abyssinians who have every year for the last six years visited us and levied large numbers of sheep, goats, horses, and camels. They have taken what they liked from us. The Abyssinian soldiers get no pay but live upon what they can pick up. It is shame if the English do not help us.*

Colonel Stacey, the British Consul for the Somali Coast Protectorate in Zeila, had noted as much in 1892 report to London:

> *A large Abyssinian expedition has returned from the Ogaden bringing with them as booty thousands of camels and cattle and property of all descriptions. I hear from other sources that they have devastated the people…. Many people are dying of starvation and an epidemic said to be cholera, but which may be 'starvation fever' has broken out and carried off numerous victims daily…. This state of the affairs is attributed entirely to the conduct of the Abyssinian soldiery who eat up everything.*

Similar stories of Abyssinian raids and looting deep in the Ogaden had been reported in early 1900s. For instance, accompanying Abyssinian military expeditionary across the Ogaden in 1901, the British Captain R.B. Cobbold wrote in his London dairy about an

Anglo-Abyssinian Campaign event that happened at Garloogube (Gerlogubi):

> *Singing their hateful songs of murder and rapine and bearing aloft the trophies taken from the bodies of the unfortunate Somalis they had killed. How hateful and disgusting it is to think of these brutes with their rifles, shooting down these poor villagers who cannot defend themselves…. We cannot help thinking that Her Majesty's Government will hardly wish us to continue passive spectators of this horrible carnage going on before our eyes.*

Just few days later, Captain Cobbold noted in his diary:

> *[The] cruel and barbarous treatment which the Somalis undergo at the hands of the Abyssinians and which, being unarmed (thanks to the British Government) they have to endure without murmur, will someday react on the heads of the Abyssinians. Someday a reckoning up will come, and with the Somalis armed the possibility of the downfall of Abyssinia would be within the range of practical politics.*

It was mainly Makonnen's army from Harar who conducted the raids into the Ogaden. But, beyond the regular raids, Makonnen has always harbored claims to the whole of Somaliland. Colonel Stacey, the British Somali Coast Consul, noted as much in a letter he sent to British Senior Officer Sealy on October 24, 1893, four years before the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty:

> *We must not forget that the Abyssinians claim the whole of Somaliland. We ought to treat with Abyssinia, make Treaty, and define the boundary. The Italians will never obtain either control or possession South towards Harar or the Ogaden, and their mythical claim down there only hampers and injures us. They should content themselves with Massawa Colony.*

From the get-go, we see that Ethiopia was part and parcel of ensuing European land grab in the Horn. During their partitioning of Africa in Berlin, London and subsequent conferences, the Europeans often used arbitrarily drawn geographical lines that did not take into consideration commonalities, language, the religious backgrounds

of the nations and nationalities they partitioned, or the future consequences of their act. In fact, the Europeans had little knowledge of the vast African hinterland, arbitrarily fixing the frontier borders. Thus, the British, the French, the Italians and Ethiopia each staked claim in a Somali-inhabited territory without much thought to what that entails. That is, Ethiopia did not conquer the Ogaden but got it as part of the great scramble for Africa. The 1897 treaty was the first to allow the Ethiopians to lay claim of the region on legal grounds.

Why did the British cede the Ogaden to Ethiopia during the 1897 treaty? The preamble of the treaty itself sheds light on this. In its own words, the agreement was signed "*to strengthen and render more effective and profitable friendship between the two kingdoms*." Further evidence of this desire to 'strengthen friendship" with Menelik was expressed by the then British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Curzon, who described the goals of the Rodd mission, and the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty as follows:

> *The mission is sent to assure King Menelik of our friendly intentions, to endeavour to promote amicable political and commercial relations, and to settle certain questions which have arisen* ***between the British Authorities on the Somali Coast and the Abyssinian Governor of Harar***.

But why strengthen friendship with Abyssinia? The speeches and the debates of British parliamentarians on the matter are quite revealing.

During a June 24, 1897, House of Commons debate, Mr. Alfred Pease of Yorkshire & Cleveland constituency described the Rodd mission to Ethiopia as "*turning over a new leaf*" with respect to British policy towards Abyssinia. In his view, "no commercial advantage" or political advantage could have been secured by Britain unless they were prepared to recognize the independence of Abyssinia. Commerce and wealth were the main drivers of European colonialism, and Mr. Pease was essentially arguing to secure British commercial and political advantage in that part of the world. To do

so, Britain ought to, in Mr. Pease's mind, recognize and deal with Abyssinia as an independent country. In his words,

> *No commercial or political advantages could be secured by us in the regions of Africa unless we were prepared to recognize the independence of Abyssinia, and to encourage such relations with that country as would enable us* ***to delimit our Somaliland frontiers and to develop our trade interests***.

Mr. Pease looked upon the development of trade with Abyssinia as the most important matter in British dealings with Abyssinia. To this end, he suggested the establishment of a railway from Harar to Berbera as means to prevent French-Abyssinian trade. The French and the British were consumed with politics over the Nile River and were competing rivalries for African control. Thus, the Brits were willing to do whatever it took to prevent or limit French footprints in this part of the world.

With respect to Abyssinian raids into the Somali peninsula, and probably as means to limit Ethiopian raids to Somali tribes under the British Protectorate, Mr. Pease suggested negotiating with the Abyssinian Government to cease such raids as they were, in essence, against the British interest:

> *We must retain our hold on this part of Africa, for it was of absolute necessity to Aden, and it was becoming of increasing importance to India especially, because in* ***Somaliland we could get the camels required for the Indian transport service***. *There were many camels in Somaliland, and the experiment was now being tried of exporting them to India.*

Here, we see that the British parliamentarian sees an agreement with Abyssinia as being crucial for securing a steady supply of meat to Aden and India and thus establishing a rapport with the Ethiopian government would probably serve the larger British interest. Suffice to say, Mr. Pease of Yorkshire was the closest friend of the Somali people in Westminster and indeed elected as a member while on hunting trip in British Somaliland. Yet even the closest friend the Somalis had in the British House of Commons was advocating for directly dealing with the Abyssinian authorities, contrary to how the British conducted their business in the Horn.

There was another matter in the minds of the Brits. Britain was fighting with Mahdists of Sudan who crushed their Egyptian ally. They were thus afraid the Ethiopians would supply arms to the Sudanese. We have already discussed how Ethiopia had unfettered flow of arms as result of its inclusion into the 1890 Brussels General Act. Moreover, the Ethiopians acquired subsequent arms and equipment when they defeated Italy at Adwa. Thus, the British were afraid there will be a flow of arms from Ethiopia to Sudan, complicating their fight. The Ogaden was therefore the price they were willing to give up for appeasing the Ethiopians and to prevent them from sending arms to the Mahdists of Sudan.

In the June 27 House of Common's debate, Sir. E. Ashmead-Bartlett of Sheffield arose to make an argument for why being in good terms with Menelik mattered as means to secure British power in East Africa and as a mechanism to defeat the Mahdists of Sudan. The minutes of the House of Common's debate describe Ashmead-Bartlett's speech as follows:

> *The future of the Soudan (sic. Sudan) and of the Trans-African Empire of Great Britain depended enormously on Abyssinia. Not only Russia, but France also had been making desperate efforts to influence the policy of that country. Knowing that [we should welcome] the present activity of the Government in sending out Mr. Rodd. Great efforts had been made by two leading European Powers to close in upon the region of the Upper Nile and thus* ***shut out British influence from the Upper Nile Waterway****. The French had been approaching from the West, from the Upper Congo, and the Russians had also been making efforts to secure influence in Abyssinia and to thus approach the Nile from the East. So long as the Italians were in the country it was difficult for us to intervene. Now, however, that Italy was retiring, it was absolutely essential, if we wished to secure our influence over the Soudan and rescue that country from the evil rule of the Mahdi, and to prevent other great Powers from obtaining a dominant influence over the Upper Nile region,* ***that we should be on good terms with the Abyssinian ruler****.*

Thus, in addition to the Sudan conflict, the Nile was equally on the mind of the British. As such, they were willing to pay any price for the rights to use and control the Nile River waters. In his memoir, Rodd described the attitude of the late Lord Salisbury, then the Prime Minister of Britain, as follows:

> *He was not much preoccupied about Abyssinian encroachments in Somaliland. He was never much concerned with the fate of 'light lands in Africa.' The French advance towards the Nile was in his eyes more serious matter, so as I could diagnose his thoughts. For he listened with great attention to my reports, sitting huddled up at his table with rug on his knees.*

Salisbury was an imperialist who viewed other European powers with a wary eye. That is, his concerns were much more with what France or Italy did and the rivalry within the European powers for colonial territories. He was not much concerned about trading Somali territories if that were to stop French advancement towards the Nile. He was particularly concerned with French plans to create a base on the Nile at Fashoda, South Sudan. There, in 1898, the British and the French will face off each other in the infamous "Fashoda Incident."

Going back to the 1897 treaty negotiations, the instructions given to Sir. Rennell Rodd for negotiating with Menelik listed five essential points to achieve in his mission:

1. He was to assure the emperor that Britain has friendly feelings towards Abyssinia
2. He was to explain that operations in the Sudan are not to be considered hostile to Abyssinia. The British would prefer dealing with civilized government such as that of Menelik than the current situation.
3. He was to explain why Britain cannot criticize Italian claims in Ethiopia due to 1894 protocol signed between Italy and Britain
4. He was to achieve definite understanding of the frontier between Abyssinia and the British Protectorate. He was to ensure there existed friendly intercourse and relations between the British, Abyssinian authorities,

and the inhabitants on either side of the British Protectorate. Furthermore, he was authorized to make, if necessary, concessions concerning the British Protectorate as long as such concessions do not interfere with the main objects for which the Protectorate was assumed. These objects are to "*to secure adequate supplies for the support of Aden and the administration of the Protectorate itself on basis which shall as far as possible be at least self-supporting and should afford some prospect of further development of the resources of the country*."

5. He was given wide latitude to offer every British facility as part of his negotiations including importing arms through British-controlled areas. Should the question of Zeila come, he was to refer to London before making any concessions.

The British were therefore willing to give up parts of their protectorate (the Ogaden) to prevent Ethiopia from siding with the Mahdi of Sudan and other colonial powers from staking claim on the Nile. They were similarly willing to do anything to ensure adequate supplies to Aden and Bombay continued. Given Lord Salisbury's' lack of enthusiasm for extending his government's commitment to the Horn, the Ogaden became casualty of British imperialism.

As a result of the 1897 treaty, the British agreed to pull back the protectorate's boundaries by about eleven kilometers opposite Harar and ceded much of Haud to Ethiopia (~25,000 miles). Aware of the needs of the Somali tribes under British Protectorate whose camels grazed the fertile Haud areas, the only thing the British tried to do was to include two clauses into the treaty. One clause required the Ethiopian authorities to provide the Somalis "good treatment" and the other to guarantee the nomads pasturage on either side of the new frontier. The wording on the two clauses, and subsequent annex, were as follows:

Article I

The subjects of or persons protected by each of the contracting parties shall have full liberty to come and go and engage in commerce in the territories of the other, enjoying the protection of the Government within whose jurisdiction they

are but it is forbidden for armed bands from either side to cross the frontier of the other on any pretext whatever without previous authorization from the competent authorities.

Article II

The frontiers of the British Protectorate on the Somali Coast recognized by the Emperor Menelik shall be determined subsequently by exchange of notes between James Rennell Rodd, Esq., as Representative of Her Majesty the Queen, and Ras Makonnen as Representative of His Majesty the Emperor Menelik at Harar. These notes shall be annexed to the present Treaty, of which they will form an integral part, so soon as they have received the approval of the High Contracting Parties, pending which the *status* shall be maintained.

Annex 3 (linked to Article II)

The tribes occupying either side of the line Shall have the right to use the grazing-grounds on the other side, but during their migrations it is understood that they shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the territorial authority. Free access to the nearest wells is equally reserved to the tribes occupying either side of the line.

This understanding, in accordance with Article II of the Treaty signed on the 14th of May 1897 (7th Genbot, 1889), by His Majesty the Emperor Menelik and Mr. Rennell Rodd, at Addis Ababa, must be approved by the two High Contracting Parties.

The matter of Somali treatment under Ethiopian suzerainty were further discussed in messages emperor Menelik and Sir Rodd exchanged. These were appended to the treaty as Annex 1 and read:

Annex 1.
Mr. Rodd to the Emperor Menelik
Addis Ababa, May 14, 1807

Your Majesty,

With reference to Article II of the Treaty which we are to sign today, I am instructed by my Government, in the event of a possible occupation by Ethiopia of territories inhabited by tribes who have formerly accepted and enjoyed British protection in the districts excluded from the limits of the

> *British Protectorate on the Somali Coast, as recognized by your Majesty, to bring to your knowledge the desire of Her Majesty the Queen to receive from your Majesty an assurance that it will be your special care that these tribes receive equitable treatment, and are thus no losers by this transfer of suzerainty.*

Menelik responded in kind,

> **Annex 1.**
> *The Emperor Menelik to Mr. Rodd.*
> *(Translation.)*
>
> *From Menelik II, by the grace of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia, Conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah.*
>
> *May this reach James Rennell Rodd.*
>
> *Peace be unto you,*
>
> *Your letter, written in Genbot 1889, respecting the Somalis, has reached me. With regard to the question, you have put to me, I give you the assurance that the Somalis who may by boundary arrangements become subjects of Ethiopia shall be well treated and have orderly government.*
>
> *Written at Addis Ababa, the 6th Genbot, 1889 (14th May 1897).*

Rodd would later defend the treaty as ensuring Somali tribe rights based on the language in Annex 1, writing:

> *I believe that with the reservations which are made with respect to the grazing rights and access to wells, the actual conditions of the tribes on the borders of the new line will not be greatly modified and that everything will go on very much as it does at present.*

Thus, the Ogaden and the reserved Haud became part of Ethiopia. True to his words, Menelik was no idle onlooker but a willing participant.

The 1897 treaty was not published immediately, the boundary not demarcated, and Ethiopian authority over the region did not change much until after the Second World War.

In 1898, a year after the treaty went into effect, the British government would defend the treaty. An exchange between

Parliamentarians Mr. A. Pease (Yorkshire) and Mr. W. Allen (Newcastle-under-Lyme) with the then British Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Curzon, on February 14, 1898, captures the ongoing debate in the British House of Commons then:

Mr. Pease: I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the recognition by the Emperor Menelik of the new boundary of the British Somali Protectorate involves any recognition on the part of Her Majesty's Government of Abyssinian claims south of the new Frontier; and, if so, *whether the whole of Ogaden and those regions between the Webbe Shebeyli and Webbe Genana [Juba]*, till lately within the sphere of Italian influence, are included in such recognition; whether, in any recognition of Abyssinian claims to any of these countries, any stipulation has been or will be made for the just treatment of the Somali tribes similar to that made for those hitherto enjoying British protection, and now transferred to Abyssinia; and whether any attempt has been made to secure the recognition by the Emperor Menelik of the northern and western boundaries of British East Africa?

Mr. Curzon: No such recognition as is suggested in the first paragraph of the question has been made. The question of the frontier between the Italian sphere of influence and Abyssinia is clearly one for discussion between those Governments. The question of the boundaries between Abyssinia and the British sphere of influence in East Africa remains for future discussion. In this connection I may add that it is proposed to appoint an Indian Officer to be the representative of Her Majesty at the Court of the Emperor Menelik to transact business with him when the occasion requires.

Mr. Allen: I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether any other agreement has been entered into with the Emperor Menelik of

Abyssinia other than that laid before Parliament; and whether any arrangement has been made in regard to the interior and Lake Rudolph?

Mr. Curzon: The answer to both questions is in the negative.

Mr. Dilke: I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, how it comes that the Treaty with Abyssinia, while it cedes portions of Somaliland, does not deal with boundaries to the west; whether large districts included in the sphere of influence attached to British East Africa, such as the Borana country, are at present claimed by Abyssinia or subject to Abyssinian raids; whether any attempt was made in the negotiations between Sir Rennell Rodd and the Emperor Menelik to settle frontiers in the neighbourhood of Lake Rudolph; and what is the present international situation of the Italian sphere east of parallel 40?

Mr. Curzon: The questions mentioned have not escaped attention, but it has been thought desirable to leave them for subsequent settlement. The last question I have already answered in replying to the hon. Member for Cleveland.

Some parliamentarians were enraged by what they saw as moral failure to protect people who the British disarmed and yet ceded them away to Abyssinia. Sir Charles W. Dilke was particularly irritated with how little the parliamentarians knew about the treaty. In a speech in the House of Commons, he stated:

> *"Then there is a matter of considerable importance ... It is a paragraph which mentions the Treaty referred to last Session in this House as a treaty of friendship and commerce with the Emperor of Abyssinia. We are not told anything of the nature of that Treaty, which is a Treaty concerning which we shall hear a great deal in the future, I am sure. Now we are told, not by mere rumour or newspaper report, but by men who know and who make the statement freely, that* ***one portion of the Abyssinian Treaty is the surrender of a very large portion of Somaliland, which has been under our***

> ***influence for a number of years***. *If it is the case that the civilising expedition to Khartoum has required us, for the purpose of its security, to recede from or to invite Abyssinia to occupy a great territory, the natives of which have trusted us, and been under our influence, I am bound to say that that consideration no doubt must affect the judgment of the House with regard to the expedition to Khartoum. We have disarmed the people of Somaliland, and they are at the mercy of their neighbours.* ***I confess I think we shall strike a heavy blow at our moral authority in that part of the world from the recession from any portion of Somaliland***, *rather than gain much from our expedition to Khartoum.*

Mr. E. Grey would later ask:

> *What is their [Somalis] treatment likely to be? I cannot suppose that in a question of this kind any mere verbal provision would be likely to have very much effect unless a careful eye is kept on it.*

But the matter was one-and-done. Ethiopia received the Ogaden and the Haud areas as part of the Great Scramble for Africa!

Whereas expansionist conquest drove Menelik's claim for the whole of Somali-inhabited lands, Emperor Haile Selassie had a different reasoning for holding onto the Ogaden: He saw the economic and the strategic value of the region. The most important trade routes of the day, from Zeila to Berbera to Harar, crossed the region. More importantly, Western oil companies found that the Ogaden had a large oil deposit. In mid-1930s, Haile Selassie gave the right to explore the oil in the Ogaden basin to Anglo-American oil companies. As shown below, his main goal at the time might have been to halt anticipated Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36.

In 1945, with Italy out of the picture, Haile Selassie gave full rights for oil exploration in the Ogaden to the American oil company, Sinclair, a news of which was published in Pittsburg Post-Gazette on September 7, 1945 (Figure 3). Sinclair has since been acquired by ARCO. Under the agreement with Sinclair, all oil development rights

were exclusively retained by the company for a period of 50 years. Thus, Haile Selassie saw the Ogaden oil as essential for the economic development of Ethiopia.

Then there was the matter of access to the sea. As a land-locked country, obtaining an outlet to the sea was always a pervasive issue for Ethiopia. Haile Selassie, realizing the economic importance of having access to the sea, continued the Menelikist approach of claiming Somali territories. But there was the possibility of Ethiopia having access to the sea via Eritrea in Asmara. In fact, in conversations with Ethiopia, Britain proposed ceding Eritrea to Ethiopia and keeping the Ogaden as a quid pro quo. In other words, if Ethiopia were to give up its claims over the Ogaden, Britain will support return of Eritrea to Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government rejected the British proposal and instead opted to fight for federating Eritrea with Ethiopia without giving up its interests in the Ogaden.

There was another trump card the British used to incite Ethiopian interest to procure the Ogaden—presumably because of its oil and natural gas basin—Zeila (Zeylac). The Brits proposed the idea of swapping the Ogaden for the port of Zeylac, an appealing idea to Haile Selassie who as early as 1934 sought to acquire the Zeylac port to secure Ethiopian access to the sea. But it appears the emperor abandoned the idea fearing it will upset the French who were wedded to ensuring the Djibouti port was the only one in the neighborhood. But once the British proposed the idea to Haile Selassie in 1945, suddenly Ethiopian interest was poked.

In June 1945, Ethiopia proposed a land swap deal: it will get an area 100 miles wide inclusive of Zeylac, Ciise, and Gadabursi tribal regions. In exchange, Ethiopia was willing to give up the Ogaden as far as south of the Webi Shabelle but not including the reserved areas and the rest of the Ogaden. This was a clever ploy in which Ethiopia were to acquire a large swath of Somali lands including Zeylac while giving up small areas of the Ogaden to the British, an offer Britain rejected outright.

During a 1949 Anglo-French treaty agreement, the British informed France their proposed territory exchange with Ethiopia. The French raised no objection to the proposed land swap so long as whatever agreement is reached honors international law and obligations. This was not to be. Ethiopia, having sensed victory over Eritrean federation, no longer felt the need to give up any part of the

Ogaden for Zeylac as it now had access to sea water via Asmara. The Zeylac-Ogaden swap project felt apart.

Figure 3. Post-Gazette news clip showing award of Sinclair Oil Company the rights of oil exploration in the Ogaden

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

LATE CITY EDITION

FRIDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1945

Sinclair Gets All Oil Rights In Ethiopia

Haile Selassie Makes Concession Covering 350,000 Square Miles

New York, Sept. 6.—(AP)—Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia has granted an exclusive oil concession covering his entire 350,000 square-mile empire to the Sinclair Oil Corporation, part of it under a 50-year lease, it was announced today by H. F. Sinclair, president.

In return for the right to explore for and ship petroleum out of the country, the oil company will pay royalties to the emperor in addition to building one or more schools and hospitals, clinics and research foundations. It also will pay for educating Ethiopians in the United States for the next 10 years.

Previous Deal Recalled

Once before, in 1935, Haile Selassie deeded more than half his empire for exploitation and development by Anglo-American oil interests. At that time he acted in the vain hope that this would halt an anticipated Italian invasion.

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The deal, engineered by British Promoter Francis M. Rickett, finally fell through after causing a world furore.

The new grant was signed in New York for Ethiopia by Ato Aklilou Abte Wold, vice minister of foreign affairs and his country's chief delegate to the San Francisco security conference.

Repercussions Inevitable

Under the concession, all oil development rights for the entire territory—equal in size to Texas and Oklahoma combined, with Massachusetts and Rhode Island thrown in—will rest exclusively with the Sinclair corporation for five years. Then 50 per cent of the territory will be released. After five more years another 25 per cent of the country will be released.

The contract almost certainly will have wide commercial as well as possible diplomatic repercussions in the Middle East, where British interests have been particularly strong.

One of the popular stories told about the Somalis is that quarrels among the various Somali tribes during the late nineteen century led to their partitioning by the Four Colonial powers—Britain, French, Italy and Ethiopia. This could not have been further from the truth. While the Somalis have complex tribal structure, disagreements between them were not chief among the factors that led to the Somali Peninsula partitioning. As faith would have it, it was the Four Colonial powers, what ought to be referred to as the colonial quartet, that split the Somalis into five regions.

Territorial redrawing among the colonial powers in the earlier 20th century, two world wars, Ethiopia's loss of independence in 1936 to Italy, and various opportunities to re-negotiate the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty did not dispose of the Somali region from Ethiopia. Of various Anglo-Ethiopian, Italo-Ethiopian and Franco-Ethiopian treaties, the Somalis were not present nor aware of what the colonial quartet decided. Here is chronicle of various treaties from 1890 to 1955 in which Somali voices were absent while their fate was decided by the colonial powers:

1890	European powers signed arms embargo agreement, the Brussels Act, which prohibited the importation of all arms and ammunition to the interior of Africa. Ethiopia, as party to the agreement and a Christian nation, is exempted from the Act while Somalis are included
1891	Menelik writes his famous Circular Letter on October 4, 1891, to Italy informing the European powers he won't be idle onlooker and claims whole of Somalia to be Ethiopian land.
1894	Britain and Italy reach an agreement that marks demarcation of their sphere of influence in Eastern Africa. The British receives most of the Ogaden and the Haud areas to be added to the British Protectorate.
1897	Britain ceded the Ogaden and reserved areas to Ethiopia.
1903	The US-Ethiopia signed treaty to establish relationship between Ethiopia and the US. The US considers Ethiopia to be an ally from here onwards.
1905-30	Ethiopia signs various treaties with Europeans from 1905 to 1930 that establish commercial relationships and friendship
1932	Anglo-Ethiopian boundary commission demarcates the boundary lines delimited in 1897
1935	Franco-Italian treaty hands most of the Ogaden and southern Somalia (Benadir) to Italy.
1942	Ogaden and Haud administration returns to Britain
1943	US and Ethiopia sign an accord on "mutual aid in the pursuit of the war against aggression." These treaties and accords help establish Ethiopia as an essential player.

1944	Britain agrees to cede the Haud to Ethiopia
1946	Ethiopia lays claim to the Ogaden and Benadir (all Italian territories, including Eritrea)
1948	Britain proposes area swap involving Zeila and Ogaden
1948	Britain cede the Ogaden to Ethiopia
1949	Britain informs France about proposed land swap involving Zeila and the Ogaden
1955	Britain cedes the Haud to Ethiopia

It is misnomer to argue tribalism was the root cause of Somali partitioning when, as in Congo which was split into French Congo, Belgium Congo and Portuguese Angola, the colonial quartet arbitrarily split Somalis into French Somaliland, British Somaliland, Somali Italiana, and ceded the Somali region to Ethiopia.

The root cause of the Somali peninsula split was colonial imperialism, Salisbury of Britain's obsession with the Sudan and Nile River at the cost of all else, British-French-Italian rivalry, and expansionist conquest of Emperor Menelik who wanted to have his part in the scramble for Africa. It was imperial partitioning of Africa. The poor Somalis were kept in the dark through it all, as was eloquently put by the Somali poet Farah Nur in his lament of the whole affair:

> *The British, the Ethiopians, and the Italians are squabbling,*
> *The country is snatched and divided by whosoever is stronger,*
> *The country is sold piece by piece without our knowledge,*
> *And for me, all this is the teeth of the last days of the world.*

By now, as many have come to recognize, the treaty of 1897 was the mother of all future problems in the Horn. Mr. Pease of Yorkshire has been proven correct in his predictions when he wrote:

> *The Somali is really the most harmless person that exists as long as he is fairly treated, and he is the reverse when under an incapable administration. Partly putting him under Abyssinia, which our present treaty does, is grave error for many reasons … What has been done hitherto with Menelik is giving him land and its owners which does not belong to us, and this shows policy which shows no trace of firmness and absolutely no fairness.*

And Mr. Wilkes was proven correct once more when he wrote in 1903 that the Ethiopian expansionist policy "*shall give us a lot of trouble in the future*." And trouble, it has given us all.

The errors of 1897 could have been afforded in mid 1930s and at the end of 1948, if only cooler heads prevailed. That was not to be as the world fumbled once more to correct the errors of the past and the 1897 tragedy. A discussion of the events of 1948 follows.

2
1948 | A Protest Letter

> "*My people [Ogaadeni] are under no one's jurisdiction and take orders from no one but me … Our fight with Ethiopia has nothing to do with Somalia. We are indifferent to the government's position, though we still expect and hope our movement will be recognized both by Somalia and by the world*."
>
> — *Garaad Makhtal Daahir, rejecting 1964 American truce scheme between Ethiopia and the Somali government over the Ogaden (New York Times, 1964).*

The year 1948 can be said to be the most consequential for the Somali Region in Ethiopia. As the fever of independence from colonial powers swept across Africa, and fatigued by the costly second world war, European colonizers have decided to let go their former colonies. The idea was to put the colonies under UN-designated trusteeship for a given period until independence. From 1945 onwards, 'guardianship' of the colonial territories was the talk of the town in the United Nations and in cabinet meetings of the Four Powers nations (Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and France) who were the victors of World War II.

The British, whose colonies expanded across present-day Somaliland, the Ogaden and the reserved Haud areas (present-day Somali Region), and the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya, lobbied for uniting all Somali territories under one administration. Then British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ernest Bevin, proposed the idea of creating a united Somalia under the trusteeship of

Britain, inclusive of all Somali-inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa.

French Somaliland (present-day Djibouti) was not included in the Bevin plan for united Somalia. Bevin did not want to ruffle feathers with a fellow member of the Four Powers by including French Somaliland in his proposal. Rather, he thought that, upon consent from the French, Djibouti could be re-united with the other Somalis.

The British were undoubtedly safeguarding their interests in the Horn of Africa by proposing a single administrative unit under their watch. For example, we know that Sinclair Oil Company were under the protection of the British Military Administration (BMA). In May 1948 House of Commons exchange, Parliament Member Somerville Hastings asked the then British Secretary of War, Emanuel Shinwell, whether the BMA will provide necessary guards to protect Sinclair due to attacks by "*disorderly persons in the Ethiopian Ogaden"* on oil extraction workings. Mr. Shinwell informed Mr. Hastings that there were intergovernmental discussions on the possibility of Sinclair resuming its oil extraction operations and therefore was not at liberty to speak on the matter. This and other correspondences show the British were mainly interested in safeguarding their economic and political hegemony.

Bevin's plans for greater Somalia arose as result of post-war discussions on what to do about Italian colonies. Following the 1941 defeat of Italy in the war theater, *Somalia Italiana* was put under temporary British Military Administration. As consequences, the Italians had little sway over the international debate on Somali colonies and the remaining Four Powers were mainly occupied with a post-war game of chess as they eyed each other in a freshly simmering new cold war politics.

On September 3rd, 1945 British cabinet meeting held at 10 Downing Street, arguments for and against the idea of "Greater Somalia" were made. Those in favor of the idea largely built their case on economic terms, arguing if a single territory were formed out of the existing separate units, there would be a far better chance of the emergence of a single-supporting entity. Those against the proposal were weary of other European powers and the United States viewing the trusteeship as a mere expansion of the British Empire. They also worried about the heavy burden a trusteeship will impose on British taxpayer.

The idea of greater Somalia seems to have taken hold in the British government. In a speech in the House of Commons in 1956, Sir James Johnson of Rugby constituency spoke about the Somali issues and Sir Bevin's plan. In his parliamentary speech (see figure 4), Sir Johnson spoke about the ill-fated 1987 British agreement with Menelik II, the problems that treaty created for both the British and the Somalis, and the cascade effects it had on subsequent British action in the Horn of Africa. With respect to Bevin's plan, Sir Johnson recalled:

> *In 1947 the late Ernest Bevin had a scheme for this area. He wanted to unite all Somalis in one united Somalia. At this moment, what was formerly Italian Somaliland is due to get independence in 1960 and will, of course, get it. Many of the 2 million Somalis are there. Ernest Bevin wished to unite those 2 million with our 750,000, and obviously later with the Ethiopian Somalis and, perhaps, with the French Somalis, if he could get consent, to form a new nation in the Horn of Africa.*

Bevin's plan for Somalis was on full steam among the British, especially among the military and colonial administrators. On April 25th, 1946 Paris meeting of the Council of Foreigner Ministers (which was setup to deal with post-World War II settlement issues by the Four Powers), Sir Ernest Bevin put forward the British proposal creating a united Somalia under Britain trusteeship.

True to color, the United States and the Soviet Union summarily rejected the idea as a pure British expansionism and an attempt by the Brits to obtain territorial aggrandizement. The Americans were specially very clear on their stance with respect to the Ogaden as far back as 1944, in part owing to extensive Ethiopian lobby and their oil interest in the region via Sinclair. In September 1944, Mr. Cordell Hull, an Advisor to President Roosevelt, wrote to him:

> *The Ogaden is an integral part of the territory of an independent state and ally.*

Thus, the Ogaden were to be off-hands as far as the U.S was concerned, in clear appeasement to their Ethiopian "ally." In his House of Common's speech, Sir Johnson of Rugby ruminated on what could have been:

> *Unfortunately, the Americans and the Russians at that time did not assist the late Foreign Secretary [Earnest Bevin] at New*

York in this plan [for greater Somalia], and it lapsed. ***What a pity that we did not carry on with it****. There is no doubt that at the moment our prestige and our capacity for good will and influence in this part of Africa are slumping.*

Figure 4. Mr. James Johnson's speech about the Ogaden in the UK House of Commons (1956).

1956 Speech of Mr. James Johnson at the UK House of Commons

"On 10th July [1956], The Times had a leading article entitled "Four Years to Trouble". In my view—and the Joint Under-Secretary may later confirm this—that may be "Four Months to Trouble". The facts are quite simple. About the time of the Tudors, 2½ million Somalis came from Arabia to the Horn of Africa. They wandered backwards and forwards in this area for centuries with no boundaries to their grazing areas. In 1897, some thirteen years after we got there for the first time, we wanted to safeguard our flank when moving down the Nile to Khartoum to attack the Mahdi, and so we made a treaty with Menelik II.

In that treaty, we said that we would hand over to the Abyssinians about 25,000 square miles of what we now call the Somaliland Protectorate. For forty years no one, least of all the illiterate Somali herdsmen who wandered with vast flocks of sheep, cattle and goats, knew anything about that. In the thirties it burst upon them. Then came the 1939–45 war; and ultimately, in 1954, Her Majesty's Government signed a treaty with the Ethiopians confirming the handing over of that 25,000 square miles of no man's land in the Reserved Area of Haud.

The difficulty is that some 500,000 Somalis wander annually backwards and forwards over the line. The Ethiopians are determined to assert their sovereignty over this particular belt of territory. I think that they are mistaken to act as they do, and they are building up for themselves an enormous fund of ill-will and even enmity among the 2½ million or more Somalis who are on their east and southern borders. At the moment, we are allowed to have 200 illalos, or police, to look after British interests in that area; and I hope that we shall increase that number to 700. I shall return to that topic shortly.

We have had continual bother ever since the treaty was signed. Having been there on the spot, it is my impression that the Ethiopians do not intend and, at the moment, are not carrying out the terms of the treaty. I have had a cable—as no doubt has the Foreign Secretary—about present conditions there from Mr. Hassan, President of the National United Front. I am convinced that the Ethiopian position is quite simple. At the head of the Ethiopian Government administration there is what one might term a veneer of Sorbonne and Oxford men; below that there is a large gulf, and then we get, particularly in Harar and the borders, people not unlike the Saudis and Yemenis who, without wishing to be unkind to them, are nearer to the medieval times when the Somalis first came over.

There is hostility and open enmity in the clash between those peoples. The Somalis are politically conscious. Their sons leave the territory and go as sailors to Brooklyn or Barry Dock; they mix in the world, and then return politically conscious. The action of the Ethiopians in persecuting them is cementing and consolidating not only their unity based upon their Moslem faith and their ethnic past, but also their political consciousness in the modern world.

In 1947 the late Ernest Bevin had a scheme for this area. He wanted to unite all Somalis in one united Somalia. At this moment, what was formerly Italian Somaliland is due to get independence in 1960 and will, of course, get it. Many of the 2 million Somalis are there. Ernest Bevin wished to unite those 2 million with our 750,000, and obviously later with the Ethiopian Somalis and,

Britain's advocacy for a united Somalia during the Four Power's Paris conference put into high gear Ethiopian drive to grab the Ogaden and the reserved areas. Ethiopia and its friends organized a campaign of protest and pressure in London and elsewhere. The pro-Ethiopian ex-suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst, an activist of sorts in her heyday, wrote campaign letters to the British parliament and

newspapers writ large. In her own pro-Ethiopian publication, she wrote a letter to Sir Bevin titled, "*Hands Off Ethiopia; No Annexation of Ogaden Province.*"

The Ethiopians used the old 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty (Fig. 2) as basis for annexing the Ogaden and rejected any attempts to unify it with the rest of Somalia. Yet, despite restoring Haile Selassie to his throne following the defeat of Italy, the British kept the Ogaden territories under their military administration from 1941 to 1948 as a part of de facto greater Somalia constituency. British colonial officers on the ground similarly were aware of the Ogaadeeni plight and very sympathetic to their cause. Even as early as 1942, British military officers were keen on the Somali claims to independence. For example, in a visit to Jigjiga in 1942, the British Governor of Berbera, Major Walsh, declared Jigjiga was no longer under Ethiopian rule. Aware of Somali political yearnings, the British Goerner told his Somali audience what they wanted to hear as a way to win favor with them.

Despite Ethiopia's historical claims to the Ogaden, The Somali perspective was, not surprisingly, different. For one, the Somalis were neither aware nor part of the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty. Secondly, the agreement was in direct violation of earlier agreements which the British made with Somali Chiefs in 1884-1886 to safeguard Somalilands. Thus the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty was nothing short of British treachery and contravention of earlier agreements. Furthermore, as was eloquently put by the 1978 Somali Ambassador to Great Britain, Ambassador Ahmed Mohamed Adan, in a letter published in the *Daily Telegraph*, the Somalis have always believed in their 'oneness' and fought for it. Part of the ambassador's letter read:

> *The Somali nation has since time immemorial believed in **'one Somalia' (not greater or lesser)** and has inspired to independence and self-determination but not to rule alien peoples. It was long before 1946 that Somali elders fought and died for freedom from colonialism–Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, for example, whose 20 years of militant resistance at the turn of the century led to his being dubbed the 'Mad Mullah' by the British, fought all the colonialist forces which threatened one Somalia–British,*

> *Italian and Abyssinians. (Somali ambassador to the UK, Daily Telegraph, 1978)*

The ambassador's claims were in line with those made by Somali elders (Sultaans, Ugaasyo, Chiefs) from the region who in 1948 protested any attempts to surrender the Ogaden to Abyssinia.

In January 1948, the Four Powers sent delegation to Mogadishu to find solutions for the pre-war Italian colonies. The Somali elders from the region wrote pleas to let the Ogaden territories unite with other Somalis. They based their argument on the following points:

- The Ogaden territory has been a Somali territory since time immemorial
- The international partitioning which placed the Ogaden under Ethiopia is artificial and impractical
- The Ethiopians have conquered the Ogaden by invasion as part of the great scramble for Africa and have no historical claim to the land
- All Somalis are one in race, religion, language, culture, mode of living and geography. Their economic and political outlooks are the same.
- There is no love lost between the Ethiopians and the Somalis
- The Somalis, therefore, should be allowed to live as one family unified under the same administrative, political, and economic country.

The signatories of various 1948 letters to the United Nations and the Four Powers Council of Foreign Ministers were the most notables of the Somali region. They included (*names written in Somali and arranged in alphabetical order*):

- *Garaad Makhtal Garaad Daahir*
- *Mukhtaar Ugaas Muxumed Ugas*
- *Suldaan Xassan Sheekh Ismaaciil*
- *Sheekh Aadan Yare Warsame*
- *Sheekh Axmed Nuur Sheekh Yuusuf Dubad*
- *Sheekh Cali Suufi Garaad Daahir*
- *Sheekh Maxamed Xaaji Xuseyn*
- *Suldaan Duulane Suldaan Rafleh*
- *Suldaan Maxamed Suldan Faarax*
- *Ugaas Cabdullaahi Ugas Yaasiin*
- *Ugaas Duude Ugaas Rooble*
- *Ugaas Muxumed Ugaas Xaashi*
- *Ugaas Maxamed Ugas Sigaale (Mashkooke)*
- *Ugaas Xassan Dhicis Cabdi*
- *Ugaas Xassan Xirsi*
- *Xassan Sheekh Cabdulle Xassan*
- *Aadan Kawaale*

The entirety of their letter, signed by selected few, read as shown in figure 5. Their pleas fell on a deaf ear. By September 1948, Britain had unilaterally withdrawn its troops from the region and handed over the Ogaden to Ethiopia. The Brits argued a 1944 agreement between Ethiopia and Britain (see figure 6 for the cover letter of the treaty) forced their hand. In House of Commons' Q&A session, the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Christopher Mayhew, informed the British parliamentarians the following:

> *One of the provisions of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of the 19th of December 1944, was that the Reserved Area and the Ogaden should remain under British Military Administration. This Agreement is still in force. Nevertheless, as a result of discussions between the Ethiopian Government and His Majesty's Government, British Military Administration was withdrawn from the town of Jigjiga and the surrounding area last May. The withdrawal of British Military Administration from the greater part of the Ogaden should be completed within the next few days, and, as in the case of Jigjiga, the territory in question will then have reverted to Ethiopian administration.*

The handover of the remaining parts of the Somali region to Ethiopia concluded with an agreement signed between the British and the Ethiopians in 1955 (the cover of letter of that agreement is shown in Figure 7). In May 1955, a delegation of Somali leaders delivered to the British Secretary of State a copy of a petition that demanded the return of the 'Haud area to Ethiopia' handed over to the International Court of Justice. The delegation, led by Michael Mariano of the Somali National United Front (NUF), argued to the British the handover of the Haud to Ethiopia was illegal and unacceptable. Part of their petition read as follows:

> *In view of the dangerous situation in tribal areas [in the Haud] we implore your Majesty's postponement the handing over of the Haud to Ethiopia … we hold this agreement entirely illegal and totally unacceptable to Somali race as it nullifies all our agreements with the British Government.*

Members of the British parliament seemed to agree with Mr. Mariano's position. In fact, few days before the 1955 agreement came to take effect, Mr. Frederick Willey (MB, Sunderland, North) asked the British Minister of State for Colonial Powers, if the United Kingdom will reopen the question of boundaries and seek an opportunity for boundary revision since, after all, the boundaries are artificial. Mr. Willey argues that, if necessary, the UK government should facilitate boundary revisions by means of "such measure as lease or purchase." He then turned his attention to the 1897 treaty as well as those of 1884 and 1886, agreeing with the position of the Somali delegate that the earlier treaties nullify the 1897 treaty. In his remarks, Sir. Willey stated the following:

> *I want to turn briefly to the Treaty of 1897, which the Secretary of State for the Colonies himself admitted being unfortunate. It is an example of appeasement which has had unfortunate repercussions. I appreciate the Government's point of view that they cannot repudiate an international agreement, but I do not think the question is quite as simple as that. Admittedly, I have made only an elementary examination of the Treaty, but it certainly seems obscure and there seems to be an argument on the Treaties of 1884 and 1886 that the tribal elders voluntarily placed themselves under British protection. It is very creditable to our administration that they still seek that protection. They sought it then for the maintenance of their independence, the preservation of order and other good and sufficient reasons.*
>
> *In short, there seems to be argument that at no time was any territory transferred. Consequently, it was not in our power to give away that which we did not possess. I cannot pretend to speak with any authority on these Treaties, but I should have thought that at any rate there was a case that the 1897 Treaty did not succeed in doing what it purported to do and that it was not within the power of the British Government to transfer these territories. In those circumstances, I invite the Minister to consider negotiating a reference to arbitration and to seek that the matter be referred, without acrimony, to the*

> *International Court, or in some other way that an authoritative decision be obtained out with the parties.*

Sir Willey essentially agreed with the very points raised by the Somali delegation that the earlier treaties nullify the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty, that the British government cannot give that of which it did not possess and, based on the fact that the 1897 treaty itself did not succeed in doing what it purported to do, the handover of the Haud to Ethiopia should be a matter decided by the International Court for Justice.

In support of the remarks of Mr. Willey, Sir James Johnson of Rugby provided further context and added the following:

> *The history of the case is in no doubt whatever. These people came under the Queen's protection in 1884 and 1886, willingly and with full knowledge, and in 1897 we signed the agreement with Abyssinia without their knowledge, and, obviously, without their consent. In the 1930s, they were enslaved by Mussolini. In 1940 and 1941—it is important to say this—we liberated them. After being under the heel of Italy for those years, they now go back to a power like Abyssinia, about which they have doubts and fears. In that they are justified.*

In response, the British Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, Sir. Henry Hopkinson, agreed essentially with the points raised by Mr. Willey and Mr. Johnson but made the government's stance very clear:

> *There can be no honorable member of the House who does not regret the fears and anxieties which the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of November 1954 has caused among the people of Somaliland. Certainly, my right honorable Friend, the Secretary of State, has made his position in the matter very clear, and I should like to join him in paying my tribute to the dignified bearing of the members of the delegation during their visit here and to the loyalty of which they have given such proofs to this country. On the other hand, I believe that in all the circumstances the Agreement itself was a good one.*

As in before, the calls of the Somali delegate fell on deaf ears. The Haud was handed over to Ethiopia and cries in the hinterland went unanswered. The 1954 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty had the same contours as that of the 1897 treaty, both appeasing Ethiopia without thinking about their unfortunate repercussions.

Figure 5. The Ogaden petition for uniting with the Other Somali territories (*1948 letter from regional elders to UN*).

1948 Letter from Somali Elders to United Nations and the Four Powers

We, the undersigned Sultans, Chiefs and Sheikhs who are the hereditary authorities of the Ogaden Somalis, submit this petition to your excellencies, with due respect, for careful and sympathetic considerations. The territory occupied by our people has been Somali territory from time immemorial. It is the geographical center of the Somalilands. The international division which groups us with Ethiopia is artificial and impractical. Our connection with Imperial Ethiopian Government is purely nominal and cannot be justified on any grounds. On the contrary there is every reason to justify why the Ogaden should not be of Ethiopia.

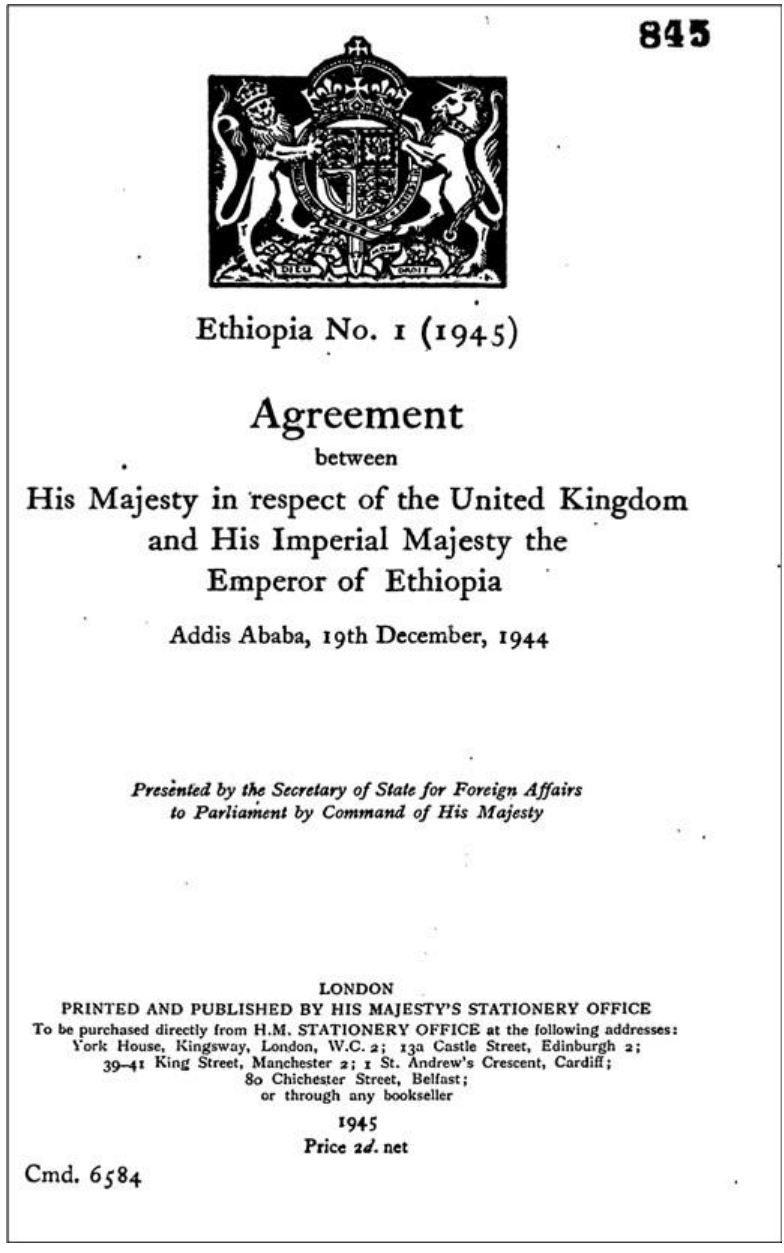
a) The Ogaden is not an integral part of Ethiopia. It is a territory which the Ethiopians have conquered by invasion half a century ago and over which it can exercise authority only by the use of considerable armed forces.
b) The Ethiopians dislike the Somali Muslim, treat them as 'outsiders.'
c) Ethiopia is not a position to develop our country
d) We do not want to be under the Ethiopian Government. As we have no voice in their government and know that it is hostile to the Somali Muslim, we have no confidence in their administration of justice.
e) Our country has never been effectively occupied by the Ethiopian government.

We now want that our country be united with other Somali territories to form one administrative, political, and economic unit. We want freedom from frontier restrictions which are the worst causes of raids and feuds between tribes. We want to be united into one country so that we shall be able to exercise the right to form a Somali nation, instead of being parceled up into unrecognizable bits. We wish to have a government which can develop our country and train us to run it. We and the other Somalis of the neighboring territories are one in race, religion, language, culture, mode of living and geography. We inter-marry freely and are therefore inter-related. Our economic interests and political outlook are the same. We are one in family, and we want to be allowed to live together as one.

Signed:

1. Ugas Mohamed Ugas Hersi
2. Garad Makhtal Garad Dahir
3. Ugas Mohamed Ugas Sigal
4. Ugas Abdullahi Ugas Yassin
5. Ugas Hassan Da'is
6. Mukhtar Ugas Mohamed
7. Sheikh Ahmed Nur
8. Sheikh Mohamed Haji Hussein
9. Hassan Sheikh Abdulla
10. Dulane Sultan Rafleh
11. Sheikh Adan Warsame
12. Sheikh Ali Sufi

Figure 6. Cover Letter of the 1944 Britain-Ethiopia Treaty on the Ogaden handover to Ethiopia



845

Ethiopia No. 1 (1945)

Agreement

between

His Majesty in respect of the United Kingdom and His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, 19th December, 1944

Presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty

LONDON
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
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Figure 7. Cover Letter of the 1954 Britain-Ethiopia Treaty on the reserved area and the Ogaden handover to Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA
87

Treaty Series No. 1 (1955)

Agreement

between the Government of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
and the Government of Ethiopia

relating to certain matters connected with the withdrawal of British Military Administration from the territories designated as the Reserved Area and the Ogaden

London, November 29, 1954

Presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament
by Command of Her Majesty
January 1955

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The consequences of the British handover of the Ogaden to Ethiopia and the indifference of the Four Powers to the pleas of the regional elders was immediate and far lasting. As predicted by the elders, Ethiopia couldn't rule the region without using considerable armed forces. From 1948 onwards, there has been successive Ethiopian violence in the Somali Region.

Right after gaining authority over the Ogaden, General Asfaw Wold Giorgis was appointed as Governor of the Ogaden region and Commander of the Third Army Division. Soon after, Ethiopian government troops commanded by Major Tsige Dibu suppressed an uprising of ethnic Somalis in Tuli Guleed in November 1951. In July 1959, the Ogaden region was administratively divided into two districts – Qabridahar (Kebri Dahar) in the south and Jigjiga in the north – each with its own governor. Acting Governor of the Ogaden region, Demissie Teferra, became the governor of Qabridahar (Kebri Dahar), and Germame Niway became governor of Jigjiga.

On the footsteps of the 1948 debacle, Garaad Makhtal Garaad Dahir established soon thereafter a liberation movement, the Ogaden Liberation Front (OLF) and launched a rebellion against the government in Hodayo in the Ogaden on June 16, 1963.

In March 1964, the United States helped the new Somali Government and Ethiopia reach a ceasefire over the Ogaden. As we will see in later chapters, Garaad Makhtal Garaad Dahir rejected the truce proposed between the Somali Government and Ethiopia. The lines that open this chapter come from 1964 interview in which the Garaad rejects the notion of a Somali government deciding the fate of the Somali region on its own.

Garaad Makhtal's response gives credence to the idea that the Somali region narrative is one that differs from the one pursued by either Mogadishu or Addis Abeba and can only be determined by Somalis in Ethiopia in conjunction with their brethren from proper Somalia. In his interview, Garaad Makhtal argued that the fight with Ethiopia over the fate of the Ogaden had nothing to do with Somalia. In his own words:

> *Our fight with Ethiopia has nothing to do with Somalia. We are indifferent to the government position, though we still expect and hope our movement will be recognized both by Somalia and by the world.*

Garaad Makhtal's struggle for freedom following the events of 1948 were the tip of the iceberg. Ethiopian aggression and atrocities led to the establishment of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in 1976. In 1977-78, Ethiopia and Somalia went to war over the Ogaden. In 1984, the struggle for freedom was spearheaded by a newly established Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). Ever since annexing the Ogaden, successive Ethiopian governments treated the region as nothing but a frontier and a buffer zone.

True to the words spoken by the regional elders, the Ethiopians could not have ruled the region except using a shear force. The Ethiopian government threw everything under her power against the liberation movements and exacted acts of violence and collective punishment unlike any seen before. Some of these acts are described in the remaining chapters of the book. These events do not include the direct conflict between the Ethiopian army and the liberation movements but rather focus on highlighting atrocities committed against regular citizens, sometimes as counterinsurgency response.

A small matter that needs addressing for the historical record is a claim made by some that a group of Somali elders asked the British to hand the region over to Ethiopia. This story often suggests that the elders reasoned it will be easier to get their independence from the Ethiopians whom they were familiar with than the European powers. This story is often told in conjunction with a Somali phrase that says: "*Ushaada nin aad ka qaadi kartaa loo dhiibtaa*." The oft-repeated phrase can be conceptually translated to mean 'if faced in quandary, leave your resources with those you can wrestle it away from.' The story suggests the Somali elders met with the British colonial administrators in the town of Kali in the Somali Region when making the askance.

The historical record does not support this story. On the account of Xaaji Maxamed Cabdi Yaasiin (Diirane), the British government organized a meeting with the Somali elders following its decision to withdraw the Ogaden territories. This meeting occurred in Kali in which the British asked the elders to engage in a conflict resolution and to receive a bounty from the British for past wrongdoings. The elders in the meeting did not understand the intentions of the British

and informed them "there are no problems among us, and we wish nothing from you." In essence, the British wanted to leave good terms in the Ogaden, mend fences with financial incentives, and with a gesture of good will. The Somali elders were having none of it. The fate of the Ogaden was already decided and Britain, as we have seen, has already made the decision to withdraw from the region in September 1948. In fact, the withdrawal of the British Military administration started in earnest in May 1948.

Over the course of searching countless historical archives, both in Britain and America, I was not able to locate a single document to show an agreement between Britain and Somali elders in which they ask for to be handed over to Ethiopia. Rather, the archives are full of historical references showing Somalis striving for unity with other Somali territories and British and other European powers arguing the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty bound their hand. What the historical references show is Ethiopian appeasement and reference at the cost of Somali cries in the hinterland.

The story of Kali meeting in which elders asked Britain to put the Somali region under Ethiopia is a myth without historical leggings. It is a story told about the Somali region but without ever occurring.

Part II

State Violence

3
1951 | Forced Settlements in Tuli

Tuli, Tuli, Tuli
Tuli, my country
Beautiful you
Place of honor

May no enemy overtake you
May your people stay forever

Place of kinship
The seed of all Somalis
May you exist forever
May you exist forever

— Conceptual translation of 2019 **"Tuliyeey"** song by the Somali singer Caamir Zaki

It was soon after the 1948 handover of the Ogaden to Ethiopia that Emperor Haile Selassie pursued land confiscation policy as a state weapon. Rich in pasture and wells, the emperor encouraged Amhara farmers from the Ethiopian highland to settle in the more fertile Ogaden region through a land ownership system referred to as the '*Qalad* ownership and tenancy.' Through the Qaladi policy, land was confiscated from local indigenous people and gave to Amhara farmers for cultivation and settlement.

The Qaladi policy served two purposes. First, it was a mechanism for the imperial government to control and subject indigenous people to serfdom. That is, the Somalis essentially were to become subservient to Amhara settlers who became *Qalad* owners. Most glaringly, the imperial government instituted for the settler farmers a land registration mechanism that allowed them to

claim land rights. This deprived local pastoralist of use rights while giving the settlers authority with which they served the political–administrative interests of the imperial government. Secondly, the Qaladi ownership was a mechanism to 'Amharize' the Somali region and make highlanders put roots in the Ogaden to ascertain Ethiopian claims of the region–a Menelikian dream came true. It was right after the conquest of Harar that Menelik declared the whole area a 'Christian land.' In a January 26, 1887 letter to Aden informing the British his conquest of Harar, the emperor wrote:

> From Menelik
>
> *King of Shoa, and of all the Galla good and bad*
>
> How are you. By the grace of God, I am well. Amir Abdellahi would suffer no Christian in his country. He was another Gran [sic Ahmed Gurey]. But by the help of God, I fought him, destroyed him, and he escaped on horseback. I hoisted my flag in his capital and my troops occupied the city.
>
> Gran died. Abdellahi in our day was his successor. This is not Moslem country as everyone knows.

Thus, a Menelikian agenda of land confiscation through conquest got institutionalized during the Haile Selassie era. It became a state weapon to assert Ethiopian authority over the Somalis.

The new policy was immediately put into practice in Tuli Guleed (formerly Gridid) in the Somali region. Tuli, as affectionately referred to by Somalis, is about 30 km east of Jigjiga. It is a small town with a rich and unparallel history.

For Somalis who lived in Tuli, their livelihood depended on sedentary farming in open agricultural land, locally referred to then as *Dadi Walled* by Geri-Jarso communities who resided the area since time immemorial. So fertile is Tuli that sorghum and wheat from the area were sent to India and China during periods of prolonged drought. The European colonialists similarly sent agricultural crops from Tuli back to Europe in late 1930s when the Italians ruled the area.

In September 1951, Haile Selassie's imperial government ordered the creation of an Amhara settlement in Tuli through the Qaladi process. The Somalis protested the confiscation of their land. At first, the Ethiopian authorities did not interfere and watched the

protestors from bay. But as the uprising grew, Ethiopian forces from the Third Division Army, led by Major Tsige Dibu, descended on the area, brutally massacring civilians. While the exact number of those killed is unsure, Somalis bitterly remember the indiscriminate use of cannon and the amount of fire the Ethiopian army used against the protestors. In the end, hundreds of Somalis fled from Tuli into Jigjiga and other areas still under the British administration.

Many recall the Tuli massacre as the first Somali stand against Haile Selassie's imperial rule. Even Ethiopian accounts of what happened in Tuli, while biased, confirm the nature of the massacre. Writing in the *Northeast African Studies* Journal in 1991, the Ethiopian historian Tibebe Eshete noted:

> In September 1951, the Gridida [*sic Tuli*] Somali staged an uprising; it was associated with the resettlement of the Amhara who had been absent from their farms since the Italian occupation.

Here, while acknowledging the establishment of "Amhara settlement" in the fertile Tuli, Tibebe Eshete seems to think the Italian and the British administrations sowed the root cause of the 1951 uprising. As he argued,

> The Gridida Somali had the benefit of owning and using the land during both the Italian and British period of administration. In 1951, the government ordered the return of the land to the *previous Amhara settlers*; this order was defied by the Gridida Somali. Soon after, a rebellion broke out in the area.

Nevertheless, Eshete acknowledged, while not calling it a massacre and forced displacement, the events of November 1951 at Tuli, writing:

> In the beginning, the government was careful not to inflame the situation. Nevertheless, after the death of two policemen who were killed while trying to impose government orders, it took a devastating step. A large force led by Major Tsige Dibu, Commander of the Third Division, was sent into the area in November 1951 and the revolt was brutally quelled. Hundreds of Somali inhabitants fled into

> areas of the Ogaden which still remained in the hands of the British.

Eshete described the Tuli massacre as one of the "*bloodiest episodes in the recent history of local conflicts*" and one that, had it not been quelled, "*would have grown into a full-scale Somali rebellion affecting wide regions*."

The Ethiopian government chose to quell the Tuli uprising through the use of full force that displaced the indigenous Somalis, ensured the security of the Amhara settlers, and reappropriated natural resources for state use. Thus, Major Tsige Dibu and the third division army committed the first massacre against the Somalis post-1948 handover.

Given the purpose of Qaladi policy to 'indigenize' the Amhara settlers and efface the Somali, what happened in Tuli can only be called 'Settler Colonialism.' In the context of European colonialism and genocide studies, settler colonialism is often defined as a colonialism in which the indigenous peoples of a colonized region are displaced by settlers who permanently form a society there. As noted by anthropologist Patrick Wolfe, "*settler colonialism seeks to replace the natives on their land*." Lorenzo Veracini, a scholar of settler colonial studies, argues the globalization of 'settler colonialism' beyond the context of European colonialism is warranted.

If we think of settler colonialism globally, a 'settler colonialist' is one who intends *to stay* in the colonized lands. That is, settler collectives such as Amhara settlers in Tuli intend to permanently occupy and assert authority over indigenous lands. The Amhara settlers came to stay. When the Italians left and the Abyssinians reoccupied Somali territories in 1941, the creation of settlements in fertile regions of the Ogaden was institutionalized. The idea was to dominate Somali-inhabited rangelands without concurrent attempt to incorporate them into the Ethiopian state. Land was confiscated.

Using the idea of settler colonialism in the Ethiopian context it becomes clear that the expansionist policies of Ethiopia were consistent with the goals of settler colonialists. As part of the colonial quartet, Ethiopia was not there only for economic reasons or labor. Rather, as evidenced by the events of Tuli and elsewhere, the Ethiopian state sought to establish settlements that would indigenize Amharas in Somali territories.

Unlike settler colonialism of Europeans that sought to 'replace' the natives of a land, settler colonialism in the Ethiopian context meant the establishment of settlement communities, often Amhara farmers, that take over Somali lands for their own benefit. In fact, the Ethiopians resorted to what they called '*Sedgo* establishments' to create harmony between settler communities and the Somalis. As noted by Tibebe Eshete:

> The *Sedgo* was an institution developed between the Amhara and the Somali, based on the latter' s tradition, for mutual benefits. Mechanisms of fostering interdependence were worked out. Each side made a vow to respect his commitments entered in the *Sedgo* tie by a formal oath.

Unlike European settlers, Ethiopia tried to create ethnic partnership between the Amhara settlers and the local indigenous Somalis. However, the Abyssinians have always thought of the Somali as lesser. In the words of Charles Geshekter:

> With the veneer of imperial power went a chauvinist vocabulary of supercilious, condescending terms used by highland residents to contrast the lowlands and its people with their own cool, mountainous homeland. Somalis were called *barias* (slaves), *shiftas* (bandits), or *shiretam* (from *shiret* – lion cloth) ... the Somalis were seen as simple despoilers, as unruly disobedient children.

The uprising in Tuli Guleed was the Somalis way of rejecting settler colonialism. Major Tsige Dibu's response will serve as classic Ethiopian recipe used by successive Ethiopian regimes on how to confiscate Somali lands, put down uprises, and enforce imperial decrees. From 1951 on, Qaladi ownership in which Amharas settle in the Somali region became mainstream as was taxation and control of water points. All of these were important elements of an imperial pacification campaign in the Ogaden.

If the 1950s illustrate imperial attempts to 'Amharize' the Somalis, that attitude remained inscribed in the hearts of Ethiopians ever since the imperial days. A 2012 conversation between social scientist Rony Emmenegger and Kidame, a highlander who was "*born and raised in Jigjiga"* but "*went to the Ogaden for work*"

under the *Derg* regime shows how the Ethiopian attitude never changed ever since Menelik's violent takeover of the Ogaden. Emmenegger and Kidame's conversation was concerned with the 1991 destruction of the statue of Afawarq Walda-Samyat, a famous Ethiopian war hero whose statue the *Derg* regime erected in front of the governor's office in Jigjiga. Emmenegger spoke with Somalis and highlanders in Jigjiga about how Afawarq's statue was dismantled and what that signified for Somali history in the region. Kidame, the Ethiopian, was having none of it. As he told R. Emmenegger,

> No, there was no statue [of Afawarq]. In fact, there was one statue of an Ethiopian patriot, but it was not Afawarq … In my personal opinion, it is awkward to destroy the statue. If he did wrong, he will be remembered accordingly, but that's [nevertheless] history. Meles may [have] destroyed the statue after the arrival of the EPRDF and the new regime … [However] what you learn from history should be maintained for future generations. ***But the Somali region never had a history***."

Kidame's rejection of Somali history or claim to Jigjiga and the Ogaden is consistent with the imperial ambitions of Ethiopians in the Somali region. R. Emmenegger captured this well, noting (*bold emphasis mine*):

> Kidame's criticism resonates with a perspective of ***highland settlers of the lowland frontier as a no-man's land not yet integrated into history—unitary Ethiopian state history***. Ethiopian state expansion entailed the imagination of a sovereign Ethiopian nation-state in juxtaposition to an oral, pastoralist and unruly Somali society at its frontier—a society lacking all those attributes needed to qualify as a sovereign nation: a sedentary and centralized form of political organization, a territory and a history. Put to work as an ideological project in the course of state expansion, it dislocated ethnic Somalis both from territory and history. In turn, it legitimized

> Ethiopian state intrusion across the frontier and the subordination of ethnic Somalis, thus justifying their dispossession, displacement, and exclusion—as people without a territory and "history" that are in need to be civilized. In my conversation with Kidame, this denial of a Somali society being historically rooted in the lowland could still legitimize the Ethiopian state's past intrusion in retrospect.

Kidame's denial of the Somali region history and advancing the highlander perspective of the region as 'no-man's land' populated by 'pastoralist and unruly Somali society' is a direct consequence of the Qaladi settler policy. It is built on imperial narrative through which the Ethiopian state penetrated the Somali region. The creation of Amhara settlements, Amhara-inspired infrastructure, land appropriation and acquisition, as was the case in Tuli, through the Qaladi settler policy sought to legitimize Ethiopia's state violence while at the same time displacing and excluding the Somalis from the Ethiopian state.

Nine years after putting down the Tuli uprising, Major Tsige Dibu, promoted to the rank of General by then, will die after failed coup d'état against Haile Selassie in 1960. The abortive coup d'état was led by Germame Niway who we saw in chapter 1 was the first Governor the emperor appointed to lead Jigjiga! Such is life where those who subjugated the Somalis to serfdom died fighting a rebellious cause against the emperor whom they so diligently served just few years back.

4
1957 | Public Lynching in Jigjiga

> "*No house will be safe without a fence and the fence of Ethiopia will be the Somali and the desert*"
>
> — Emperor Haile Selassie, in a letter to Belata Ayele Gebre, governor of the Hararghe Awraja

There is a contested picture (next page) whose origins are unknown. It shows the gruesome lynching of several men in a city center. The men hung from a pole, their bodies dangling, as a city crowd watches. Some have argued these are Eritrean men and that the event shown happened in Eritrea. Others have suggested the men are Somali and the event happened in the Somali Regional city of Jigjiga in 1957. In either recount, what is not contested is that 'lynching' was a tool used by the Ethiopian imperial state as a punitive measure. The late Somali psychologist, Hussein Abdullahi Bulhan, who witnessed the 1957 Jigjiga lynching as a 10-year-old, would later recall the gruesome events of that day. In Professor Bulhan's own words:

> *An Ethiopian tax collector was killed in the environs of Jigjiga, my hometown. The killer was neither known nor apprehended. But for revenge and mass intimidation, the Ethiopian authorities decided to execute ten innocent Somali men. On the day of the execution, every Somali in town—child or adult—was forced to watch the terrifying spectacle. Each victim was made to stand on a pick-up truck with hands tied behind his back. A noose or rope, suspended from a horizontal pole, was then placed around each victim. After a speech of intimidation and warnings*

to disgusted observers, the driver was ordered to quickly move the truck leaving behind a writhing humanity in mid-air, gasping and sometimes urinating in death. I can never forget the plea of one bearded-elder among the victims. With remarkable calm and dignity, he uttered one and only one request:

> *"If my son and I must die, please let me go first and in a different pole."*

That plea was never granted. The grisly execution proceeded as planned. The ten men were left hanging for several days for all in the city to see. Nightmares and repressed rage subsequently became part of our colonial heritage.

Figure 8. A contested picture of a lynching somewhere in Ethiopia. Some folks have argued the men lynched here were Eritreans and this event took place in Eritrea. Others suggest this occurred at the center of Jigjiga in 1957. What is not contested is that 'lynching' was a tool used by the imperial army as counterinsurgency tool (iStock Photo).

Whether this specific photo shows the events Professor Bulhan witnessed or a similar event in Eritrea, what the picture and

eyewitness accounts tell us is that the Ethiopian government used 'state terror' and mass intimidation as official policy to establish its control. In fact, throughout the twentieth century "Ethiopian attempts to establish superior-subordinate social relations with Somalis," wrote Charles L. Geshekter, "ranged widely from 'indifference to bursts of violence,' sometimes difficult to distinguish from 'official terror.'" Thus, Ethiopia has always used violence as means to collect tax or establish subordination among the Somalis. As early as mid-1930s, British officers have noted Ethiopian violence against the Somalis. Writing in his private diary, the British Consular Official in Somaliland, Major (later Colonel) A.T. Curle wrote about an event that happened on June 30th, 1930:

> Last week, the Abyssinian Government sent a punitive patrol against some people over the west end of our Somaliland border – they killed and burnt everything, **111 men, women, and children** were shot regardless of who or what they were.

Such violence was constantly used by successive Ethiopian regimes. One argument suggests that, unlike the European powers, the Ethiopian state never attempted to establish proper government mechanisms to tax the Somalis and merely relied on intimidation and raids as means for tax collection. Colonel Curle noted in his diary the following:

> The Ethiopians had always had an acute inferiority complex regarding the Ogaden. They didn't tax the Ogaden normally; The Governor-General of Harar would go down with a large force every three or four years and collect tribute, which meant seizing camels and cattle. But they've always suffered losses because the Somalis would lead them on to lousy water and then let them die in the desert. So, they always went down there with a very strong escort.

Considering the Menelikian attitude towards the Somali region as a "fence and desert" that is there to protect Ethiopia against invading colonialists, it is not surprising to find Ethiopian authorities mainly used military incursions to extort tax tributes from Somali pastoralists. Nor had the Somalis accepted Ethiopian rule after the British handover of the region to Ethiopia. In fact, the precipitating event that led to the lynching in Jigjiga in 1957 had its roots in the

way the Ethiopian authorities attempted to collect tax from a Somali man, leading to the death of the Ethiopian tax collector.

Jigjiga had long been a city in which the Ethiopian empire sought to establish their authority over the Somalis. In the words of the social scientists Rony Emmenegger, "*Jigjiga emerged as an Ethiopian stronghold on its Somali periphery and as a logistical center for its violent expansion into the lowland frontier*." Indeed, as early as 1900 Sayd Maxamed Cabdille Xassan and his Dervishes had unsuccessfully attempted to repel Ethiopian colonial expansion into Jigjiga and the Ogaden, a war he continued waging until his passing in 1920.

The mass intimidation of the locals in the 1957 lynching demonstration was a message intended for the larger Somali populace to give-in to Ethiopian authority. Yet, the Ethiopian government has not previously attempted to establish any 'serious' authority in Jigjiga or the Somali region as whole. Things seem to have changed following the rise of Somali nationalism as the yearning for independence got amplified through the Somali peninsula.

Jigjiga was under British Military Administration in 1940s when the British allowed the Somali Youth League (SYL), the preeminent Somali national movement and standard bearer of Somali identity, to establish an office in Jigjiga, Harar, Ayshaca and elsewhere. This appears to have awaken the Ethiopians to 'the dangers of the organization.' In Tibebe Eshete's telling:

> The League was permitted to have an office and hoist its own flag though it was clear to the British that its activity jeopardized Ethiopia's position. Meetings and demonstrations were organized by the League in the streets of Jigjiga, in residential areas occupied by the Amhara, and near government offices. The march carried out in the residential areas, which were accompanied by chanting and slogans, were meant to create an atmosphere of intimidation. From time to time there were public displays of disrespect toward the Ethiopian flag during hoisting and lowering ceremonies.

Eshete's description of the SYL is in line with Ethiopian attitudes towards the league. Ever since the handover of the Somali region to Ethiopia, the Ethiopian authorities viewed the SYL and the rise of

Somali nationalism as threat to the very existence of the Ethiopian state. Using the Anglo-Ethiopian treaties as a tool, Addis Ababa demanded the British restrain the SYL in Jigjiga.

In June 1948, few mere months before the handover of the Somali region to Ethiopia, the British sent policemen to remove the SYL flag from their office. This provoked a riot in which 25 supporters of the league lost their life. The league's office was consequently closed. However, while their physical office may have been closed, the yearning for independence and joining their Somali brethren had traveled far and wide throughout the Somali region.

The Ethiopian fears of the SYL in Jigjiga was grounded in truth. Unlike the orientation of the SYL in Mogadishu, SYL in Jigjiga had a different orientation and perspective. As was eloquently put by the Historian Cedric Barnes,

> The particular history of the town of Jigjiga and its environs, along with the Ogaden, could not be easily subsumed into the greater good of pan-Somali nationalism. Jigjiga was one of the first Ethiopian garrisons pushed out into the Somali lowlands in the late nineteenth century.
>
> ⋮
>
> As modern administrative arrangements were implemented in Ethiopia during the 1920s and 1930s, Jigjiga had become an important political center for Ethiopian Somalis, acting, as it still does, as the unofficial capital of the Ogaden region.

What this meant was that the Somalis in the Somali region held special perspective that appealed to a specific *variant* of Somali nationalism.

The Ethiopian response to quell Somali nationalism and the cries of the hinterland in Dhagaxbuur and Ayshaca where the Ethiopian army committed mass murder on a scale is described in the next chapter.

5
1960 | Mass Murder in Degahbur and Aisha (Ayshaca)

Every nation has its own flag.
Every nation has its own flag.
Ours is like the sky without any signs of clouds
All of which we have come to love.

...

Oh, you White Star, at your service we are
Oh, you White Star, at your service we are
Superior you are, in any part of our land
Be famous oh Star, like the sun

...

On the day you arose, our hearts you have
On the day you arose, our hearts you have
Purified with pureness
O Allah, do not dim the flag, pray we in this night

— A conceptual translation of **Cabdulaahi Qarshe's** official Somali national anthem song.

On June 26th, 1960, the Somali flag flew high over the sky in the northern Somali city of Hargeisa. Jubilant cries of "every nation has its own flag" filled the air. It was a joyous moment across the Somali peninsula, from the port city of Berbera to Boosaaso; from the mountains of Shiikh to the fertile plains of lower Jubba; from the Nugaal valley to the shores of Ras Kaamboni. At last, after 73 years of European rule, a Somali flag was raised in a freed Somali territory! The New York Times reported the celebratory mode of the Hargeysa masses on that fateful Sunday:

> "*Crowds danced in the streets here [Hargeisa], bonfires blazed from the hills and fireworks burst in the sky as last midnight spelled the end of Britain's rule in Somaliland*."

World leaders acted in kind, wishing the freed territories well. The then U.S. Secretary of State, Christian A. Herter, sent his congratulatory remarks in a Department of State press release. The secretary wrote:

> Their Excellencies,
> Council of Ministers of Somaliland, Hargeisa
>
> *Your Excellencies: I extend my best wishes and congratulations on the achievement of your independence. This is a noteworthy milestone in your history, and it is with pleasure that I send my warmest regards on this happy occasion.*
>
> — U.S. Department of State Press Release 357, June 1960

But there was one party who was not as thrilled as the Somalis or ecstatic for them as did the rest of the world: Ethiopia.

In *Betrayal of the Somalis*, the late Louis Fitzgibbon eloquently described the attitude of the Ethiopians towards the Somali independence as follows:

> *The independence of Somalia in 1960 did not at all suit the purposes of Ethiopia, who immediately declared a State of Emergency in the Somali territory under her domination.*

The feeling was mutual. At some 158 kilometers (98 miles) away from Hargeysa, in the Ogaden city of Dhagaxbuur, a group of local youth made a secret pact—the night a Somali flag is raised in any Somali territory, so shall it be in Dhagaxbuur!

On the historic night of June 26, 1960, when the Somali flag flew high in Hargeysa skies, the Dhagaxbuur youth acted on their secret promise and raised the blue flag with the white star at city center.

Such patriotism was not unexpected. The Somalis possess strong sense of national identity and strong desire to unite with their brethren from the other Somali territories. The very flag the Dhagaxbuur youth raised in their city bore an emblem with a five-point start representing the five segments of the Somali people resulting from the Anglo-Ethiopian partitioning of the Somalis. The

flag enshrines in the Somali psyche a particular yearning for missing limbs of a whole-body; an obsessive desire for national political unification of all Somalis along the lines of the Bevin plan discussed in Chapter 2. Professor Said Samater and David Laitin described this sense of yearning as an unsettling cry for a "dismembered nation—three of whose essential constituent parts are missing (the Ogaadeen, the NFD, and Djibouti).

In that historic night, the youth in Dhagaxbuur did the unthinkable—as fireworks in Hargeysa spelled the end of British rule in Somaliland, they raised the blue flag at midnight at city center and all around Dhagaxbuur with a motto of "*Gobanimada Hargeysa qaadanayso gadaal uga dhici mayno* [the independence Hargeisa got shall be ours to taste].

Dhagaxbuur woke up next morning to a city taken over by blue flags with the unmistakable white star emblem.

The Ethiopian reaction was swift and immediate: a mass extrajudicial killing never seen before in the Ogaden. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "massacre" as:

> **1**: the act or an instance of killing several usually helpless or unresisting human beings under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty
>
> **2**: a cruel or wanton murder
>
> **3**: a wholesale slaughter of animals
>
> **4**: an act of complete destruction

Eyewitness accounts of what transpired in Dhagaxbuur in June 1960 speak of mass murder of helpless civilians, a cruel and wanton murder by Ethiopian soldiers, and the wholesale destruction of personal property. Among those who were present on that day include General Siyaad Maxamuud, Ibraahin Qowdhan, Cali Aadan, and countless others.

Shocked by what transpired, the orders from Addis Ababa to the Ethiopian city administrators was to teach the youth and the Somalis an unforgettable lesson. Here, it is important to first describe how Ethiopia exerted its rule on Somali locals throughout the Somali region.

Eyewitnesses accounts recall the city administrators gathering tribal chiefs and informing them a light punishment amounting to 'slap in the face' was due in time for the 'misguided youth' who did the treasons act. It is said that Ugaas Maxamuud Ugaas Ibrahim Gurey was the elder the Ethiopian colonialists informed there will be a light punishment of sorts for the youth. The Ugaas obliged.

What the eyewitnesses report happened next is unimaginable!

In the afternoon of that day, what was to be 'a slap in the face' turned into a punitive massacre as the Ethiopians shelled the entire city with cannon (locals colloquially refer to this as the 'Kanooni' event). Although hard to verify, the death toll reported by eyewitnesses reached ninety (90). There was an account of the police coming to the aide of their brethren when the Ethiopian soldiers switched from widely shelling the city to a house-by-house hunt. In one account, an eyewitness spoke of seven people murdered in their home.

Blood streamed on city streets. Jubilant moments of the 26th were replaced by horror. A joyful city full of pride and patriotism was gripped by fear and cries of 'how could this happen?' It is said that Ugaas Maxamuud Ugaas Ibrahim, having seen the murderous nature of the Ethiopian response, said while in a state of shock: "*Yaryar baan isku ogeynee tan waaweyni waa khalad*! [We spoke of a slap in the face, not a punitive act of this scale]."

The mass murder in Dhagaxbuur led to the first known internal displacement (IDP) of civilians in the Somali region. There was mass exodus from the city following the indiscriminate shelling that cost lives. Eyewitness accounts tell horror stories of civilians fleeing to the city outskirts and up in the mountains. Yet, as is often the case in the Somali region, the mass murder of civilians in Dhagaxbuur remains as one of the untold stories of Ethiopian atrocities over the course of successive Ethiopian regimes in the region. But the eyewitness accounts of horror and mayhem in Dhagaxbuur is passed from one generation to another in the Somali region.

As has become common in Ethiopian acts of violence in the Ogaden, the shelling of Dhagaxbuur was accompanied with confiscation of livestock, poisoning of wells, and restrictions of civilian movement. These military strategies were designed to install fear in the hearts of the regular folk and force them to submit to Ethiopian will.

Figure 9. A map showing the theoretical air distance between Hargeisa and Degahbur, some 158 kilometers (98 miles) or 18 nautical miles.

Two months after the events of Dhagaxbuur, another mass murder occurred in the industrial city of Ayshaca (Aisha) in the Sitti zone of the Somali region. Ayshaca is located about 36 kilometers north of the Djibouti-Ethiopia border, about 173 km northeast of Diridhaba (Dire Dawa) and about 348 km from Jigjiga. Its proximity to Djibouti, Somalia, and Ethiopia made it a strategic town located in the heart of an important railway crossing.

In the mid-1950s, the Somali Youth League (S.Y.L), the foremost anticolonial nationalist movement at the time in Somali-inhabited territories, opened shop in Ayshaca. This was consistent with the league's political activities which were not merely confined to Somalia but extended to British Somaliland, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The SYL campaigned for the unification of Somali-speaking regions into a 'Greater Somalia' entity along the lines of the 1946 Bevin plan discussed in Chapter 2.

Like the events of Dhagaxbuur on June 26th, 1960, the residents of Ayshaca joined their brethren across the Somali peninsula in celebrating the independence and the unification of British Somaliland and Somali *Italiana*. Having been a home to one of the more active SYL offices and yearning for independence from

colonial Ethiopia, the air was filled with jubilation and national pride. This was not to be! On Friday, August 12, 1960, the Ethiopian army circled the city with a battalion and formed a second ring on the outskirts of the first ring. Survivals of the Ayshaca massacre retold the horror of what happened next. Some of their stories is narrated here.

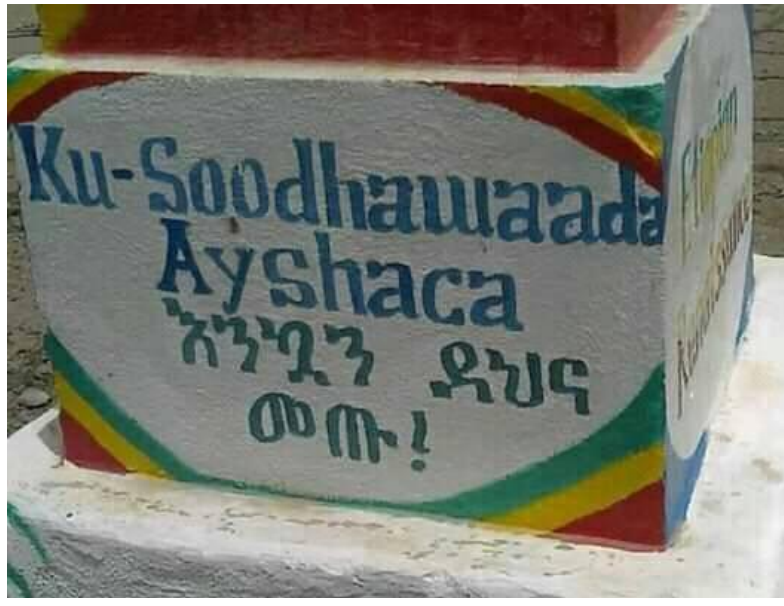

Figure 10. The "Welcome to Ayshaca" sign in Ayshaca (photo credit: Mohamed Sh. Omar)

Xaaji Cali Dugsiye, a survivor of the Ayshaca massacre, recalled how things started and what he witnessed:

> The hoisting of the blue flag in Somali territories caused the massacre to happen. This area was under British administration when the flag was hoisted in Somalia. So, the SYL who started in Mogadishu came to Jigjiga and here. Since we were all part of the SYL, there was a yearning for similar outcome here as well. This was unsettling to Haile Selassie who famously said, "*the day Somalis get their own flag, donkeys will develop horns*!" This came to be – When the flag was hoisted in Somalia, the donkeys develop horns in Ethiopia. We were expecting the British will follow suit as

> they have done in British Somaliland [sic, guarantee independence] but they just left us to Ethiopia. They just disappeared like a ghost when hoisting the Somali flag was about to become a reality here.
>
> Ayshaca is a central location for Djibouti and Diridhaba. Djibouti is about 140 km and Diridhaba about 170 km. The railways built by the Italians (the Diridhaba one) and the French (the Djibouti railway) run through the city.
>
> If I approximate the number of people who perished that day … I mean, Ayshaca was a real town then; there was no Cali Sabiix or these other towns that are booming nowadays. It was a central location for all people: pastoralists, nomads, rural and urban folks. It was the city to be.
>
> When the Somali flag was hoisted, the people gathered for an impromptu meeting. Folks like Maxamuud Xarbi have went away to Somalia. Folks like the late Axmed Qumane.
>
> When Somalia got independence Maxamuud Xarbi asked for help and said, "*We should do the same in my country, we should get our independence*."
>
> ….
>
> The army put a guard around the city for three days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. No one was allowed to enter or leave the city. On the eve of Friday night, a soldier was killed, and the army responded by killing everyone in sight. In the morning, the army ordered everyone to stay home. Then they will go around and ask folks to come out of the home one-by-one and shoot directly as they came out.
>
> People mention various number on the people who were killed. If I were to approximate the number who died, I would say around 2000 people.

Another survivor, Maxamed Maxamuud Nuur, recalled:

> The army surrounding Ayshaca killed everyone in sight. The whole reason was to erase the Somalis from the area. It was their yearning for Somali independence that caused for people to perish, animals confiscated… Essentially Ayshaca was converted to a military town… A mass burial was conducted for the ones who perished… All the houses, the

> huts we owned, were handed over to Amhara who were imported and settled the area.

From eyewitness accounts, the Ethiopian army surrounded the city and, after gathering everyone within Ayshaca and its environs, did not let anyone leave once there. A support battalion was sent from Diridhaba [Dire Dawa] to Ayshaca over the course of three days. Like Dhagaxbuur, the army shelled the city with cannon and air bombardment on Saturday. August 13, 1960. Human rights groups have put the number who perished around 500 people. Survivors claim the number was closer to 1500 to 2000. Ayshaca was burnt to the ground and eventually converted to a military garrison. Those who survived sought refuge in the village of Cali Sabiix in Djibouti which was under French protection or the village of Cabdiqaadir which was proper Somalia territory.

It is said that the late Cabdullahi Suldaan "Timacadde", the renowned Somali poet whose lyrics of nationalism and calls for liberty encouraged the masses, composed the following lines upon hearing the Ayshaca massacre:

> Warka shalayto nagu soo dhacee, aad ugu dhego beelay,
> Dhinbiilaha sidoodu wadnaha, nooga dhaawacaye,
> Nin dhegaystay Caliyow ma tumo, Dhaanto iyo heese,
> Xaqiisii nin lala dheelmadoo, dhuuntay baw darane,
> Dhibaatada ka diidaa ma helo, dhaxal adowgiise,
> Denbi-dhaaf shahiid lagu dhintuu, kuugu dhow yahaye,"

The lines can be conceptually translated as:

> The deafening news from yesterday,
> Hitting the heart like a bullet,
> Ali, no sane person will sing
> Or dance upon hearing it.
> What is worse than hiding
> While your rights are taken away
> He who sacrifices nothing, leaves nothing
> Forgiven belongs to he who dies a martyr

Somali eyes all over the Somali peninsula teared up with the poet as the news hit hearts everywhere like a bullet. As discussed earlier, a punitive measure of this nature was in bar with how the Ethiopian army behaved previously. Nothing surprising. Mass intimidation, razing of cities and villages, and bombing were normalized behavior

against the Somalis. It was Captain R. B. Cobbold who found the behavior of imperial army disgusting and hateful as they parched villages, slaughtered innocent civilians, and destroyed everything on their way during military expeditions. In his own words:

> "*How hateful and disgusting it is to think of these brutes with their rifles, shooting down these poor villagers who cannot defend themselves*."

On September 19, 2019, the current President of the Somali Region, Mustafa M. Cumar, members of his cabinet, and notables from the region commemorated the Ayshaca massacre in Jigjiga—One of the few things that have changed since 2018. During the commemoration, the lyrics of the famous Somali singer, Cawaale Aadan, captured the horror of Ayshaca and its cause beautifully:

> Ayshaca, geyi bay aheyd
> Ganacsi xora bay laheyd
> Xoolo aan gudhin bay laheyd
> Gadhcade taliyay laheyd
> Samaan godlan bay laheyd
>
> …
>
> Guushii Soomaaliyo
> Markay gobanimadu timid
> Ayey farxad gaadhayoo
> Calanka guudkay sudheen
> Gumaad baa helay bulshadaa
>
> …
>
> Waxay ku go'een dadkaas
> Xasuuqna loogu geystay
> Hooyadaa loo gowracaayay
> Bulshada gamta looga saaray
> Ileen dareen gubayaa jiray
>
> …
>
> Taariikh waa ma guurtee
> Gadaal uubadkii kacay
> Xasuus gaaray u tahay
> Dharaarkay ku haynayaan
> OOha ohoo gugii dhasha way xasuusan
>
> …

Waxay ku go'een dadkaas
Xasuuqna loogu geystay
Hooyadaa loo gowracaayay
Bulshada gamta looga saaray
Ileen dareen gubayaa jiray

...

Taariikh waa ma guurtee
Gadaal uubadkii kacay
Xasuus gaaray u tahay
Dharaarkay ku haynayaan
OOha ohoo gugii dhasha way xasuusan

The lines can be conceptually translated as:

Ayshaca, a city on the rise
With flourishing businesses
Animals healthy and plenty
Elders with whitebeards,
Parting their wisdom to all
A city in her prime
Towering above all

...

On the birth of Somalia
The drums of independence
It was a city besieged with emotions
High on hope
Hoisting the flag
For it, masses were massacred

...

People perished
Masses murdered point blank
Moms were slaughtered
Cannons rained from above
For the people dared to hope

...

History is a lesson
For generation remember
A gloomy memory

Buried deep down in their hearts
Oh, oh, forever they will remember

...

On the birth of Somalia
The drums of independence
It was a city besieged with emotions
High on hope
Hoisting the flag
For it, masses were massacred

The scenes described by the survivors of Ayshaca were one to be hold. A carnage for the ages. Eyewitness accounts recall the digging of a pit for mass burial. The city was left in ruins. A sign in the city (see photo) reminds all about the massacre of that day. It simply reads, "*13 Ogosto, 1960 waa maalintii xasuuqa Ayshaca [August 13, 1960, is the massacre day in Ayshaca].*"

Figure 11. Aerial view of Ayshaca before recent rebuild efforts (Used via Common Creative License, credit: Mohamed Sh. Omar)

Figure 12. A sign at Ayshaca building reminds passersby's that August 13, 1960, is the date in which a massacre took place in the city (photo credit: Mohamed Sh. Omar)

Figure 13. The current President of the Somali Region, Mustafa M. Cumar, members of his cabinet and notables commemorate the Ayshaca massacre in Jigjiga on Sept 19, 2019, a year after President Mustafa came to power – One of the few things that have changed since 2018.

6
1963 | *Geesh* Gathering in Hodayo

I've still not admitted defeat
nor have I withdrawn:
that high inspiration,
that talent I was endowed with,
has not discarded.
...
When men dedicate to the struggle
and determine to fulfill their duty,
when they ready themselves for the charge,
amass the finest thoroughbreds,
when the reins are on the racers,
I never step aside.

— "Clarity," a poem by Hadraawi and conceptually translated by WN Herbert et al.

The early 1960s were particularly difficult period for the Somali region. Following a decade of trusteeship, both British Somaliland and Somali Italiana got their independence while the Somali region remained under Ethiopian authority. As was shown earlier (see chapter 2), the Somalis did not seek nor appreciate Ethiopian authority over their land. In the words of historian Charles Geshekter,

> The Ogaden Somalis neither sought nor received support services from Ethiopian authorities who considered that their own integrity (and not that of the state they represented) depended on safeguarding the center's culture from submersion under culturally inferior but numerically superior groups.

We have already discussed how the Ethiopians never ventured outside of their military garrison's other than when going out to collect taxes or conducting military expeditions to capture Somali livestock. In her description of the Ethiopian Government in the Somali region, the British historian Margery Perham described the extent of Ethiopian sovereignty as follows:

> The sovereignty of the Ethiopians over the Somalis was expressed chiefly by means of intermittent expeditions, not far removed from raids. Stock was taken as tribute from the more accessible groups, who thereby raided their nearest Somali enemies in order to recoup their losses.

With the independence of Somalia in 1960 on the background, Somalis in the Ogaden resisted Ethiopian authority intended to 'civilize' and control the unruly Somalis. Haile Selassie also imposed new taxation and strict rules. The Somalis instead asked for freedom and self-governance.

In an interview published in the New York Times on March 28, 1964, Garaad Makhtal Garaad Daahir laid out the reason why Somalis were resistant to Ethiopian rule and rejected their authority. In his own word,

> *We wanted our freedom. It was impossible to seek it through democratic means in a country where there is no free speech and no political machinery, where expeditions are sent to collect taxes by force—seizing camels and millet crops… When we asked the emperor for internal self-government, he threatened to shoot 180 Somali chiefs. He had an inkling what we were up to and tried to impose a new head tax on cattle. Quran schools were ordered closed, and the laws allowed for one wife, and no divorce. All this interfered with Muslim Somali traditions; and as leaders, we were expected to execute this policy. We discussed it and decided to pull out. When the Ethiopians discovered our opposition, they intended to arrest all of us. But by that time, we had gone into hiding, where we formed the Liberation Government.*

In other words, the Ethiopian behavior forced the hands of the Somali chiefs to form armed liberation front. The Somalis wanted

their freedom and were not willing to be idle onlookers dependent on the whims of Addis Ababa. In June 1963, Garaad Makhtal Garaad Daahir and about three hundred other notables gathered in Hodayo, a watering place north of Wardheer. There, they established the first indigenous liberation movement against the Ethiopian regime, the Ogaden Liberation Front (OLF), more commonly known among the Somalis as the *Geesh* (army) or simply, *the Front*. As John Markakis noted,

> The rebels' number was small, their weapons few and ancient. Ill-prepared to confront the Ethiopians, they decided to avoid engagement and concentrate instead on recruitment, training and weapon procurement.

Garaad Makhtal will later tell the New York Times in his interview how the Ethiopians "discovered' their opposition and intended to arrest them all, but how they were able to allude them and go into hiding. According to Markakis, the Garaad and his men were intercepted while in route to Iimeey on the West. There, the first clash between indigenous Somali regional front and the Ethiopian army occurred in the village of Garasbuur on the south-west of Dhagaxbuur three days after their Hodayo meeting.

Besides Garaad Makhtal, "*the main leaders of the Geesh were Ogaadeeni notables who had served the imperial government as district commissioners in their home areas. The Geesh received arms and ammunition from the nascent government of Somalia and was mostly supported by Ogaadeeni*," notes Hagmann. In other words, this was indigenous front that drove its legitimacy from regional grievances against the Ethiopian government, not a stage tool for the Somali government.

That being as it may, the leaders of the *Geesh* sought Mogadishu's help in their cause. Given the heightened sentiment of Somali nationalism and the popularity of the SYL, Mogadishu was in a position to reject the request from Garaad Makhtal *Geesh*. In fact, had it not been the yearning for unifying Somali territories under one umbrella, Somalia would have been better off ignoring the pleas of the Somali region elders. There were a lot happening at the time that would have made refusing the request easier, and probably to the benefit of the Somali republic. As noted by John Markakis:

> On the eve of Kenya's independence in 1963, Somalia was caught in a wrangle with Britain and the Kenyans over the fate of the Northern Frontier District with its Somali population. In the course of the dispute, Mogadishu broke relations with Britain, made an enemy of Kenya, and caused the Western powers to scale down their offers of economic and military aid to Mogadishu. An approach to the Soviet Union for aid proved more rewarding, but the benefit of military assistance from that quarter was not felt for another year. In these circumstances, starting a war against vastly superior Ethiopian forces hardly seemed advisable. Nonetheless, given the overweening appeal of pan-Somali unification, the government, dominated by Somali Youth League, could not refuse its support to the Ogaden rebels. 'No politician in Somalia can suspend his preoccupation with the problem [of unification]', acknowledged Adam Abdullah Osman, the country's first president.

But, on moral basis, Somalia was not in a position to refuse the *Geesh* request. The *Geesh* rebellion itself mostly involved attacking outlying Ethiopian posts and avoiding central cities and did not amount to serious threat to Ethiopian authority. However, things did come to heard on in early 1964 when Addis Ababa directly attacked Somali territories and air bombed several cities, including Hargeisa.

The 1964 Ethiopian attack included the use of US made military equipment which provoked angry response from the U.S. State Department. In 1964 telegram to Addis, the US registered it is strong displeasure with the news of Ethiopian air raids over Hargeisa and were "seriously disturbed" by possibility that the Ethiopian military used US equipment for such attack and the implications of the military action for Khartoum talk arrangements, the situation in Somalia, including expected formation of a new Somali government. The US was aware of what it called "*growing strain and tension in Ethiopia as result of Ogaden insurgency problem*" but nevertheless, hoped some relaxation might result from Khartoum talks to which it attached great importance. Therefore, it found the confirmed reports of attack on Hargeisa with "sharp sense of shock and disbelief."

In 1964, the Khartoum talks bore fruit as Somalia and Ethiopia signed peace deal that ended their short-lived war. However, as the Somali region has always exhibited distinct political dynamics that separated it from any pan-Somali agenda, Garaad Makhtal rejected the Somali-Ethiopia deal on the grounds that the Ogaden struggle had little to do with the Somali Republic or pan-Somalism. In the Garaad's own words,

> My people [Ogaadeni] are under no one's jurisdiction and take orders from no one but me ... Our fight with Ethiopia has nothing to do with Somalia. We are indifferent to the government's position, though we still expect and hope our movement will be recognized both by Somalia and by the world.

In the end, the 1960s guerrilla war led by Garad Makhtal Daahir did not translate to a tangible challenge to Ethiopian authority. "The guerrillas had neither the organization nor the material resources to wrest control of the region from the Ethiopian army, which was on its way to becoming the largest force in sub-Saharan Africa," at the time, noted J. Markakis. Essentially, the *Geesh* resorted to hit-and-run operations against police posts and army caravans. In response, the Ethiopian army initially confined itself to major cities that were unlikely to be attacked by the *Geesh*. However, as noted by T. Hagmann,

> The *al-jaysh* [aka *Geesh*] uprising was met with harsh repression by the imperial army, which sent reinforcements to towns attacked by the insurgents. It is likely that the immediate government response of mid-1963, which sought to discourage future unrest, produced the highest casualty numbers.

Essentially, the *Geesh* was overpowered and were no match for the mighty of the imperial army. However, while they lacked in might, the *Geesh* struggle laid the ground for indigenous fight for self-determination throughout the Somali region. They succeeded in sowing the fruits of freedom fight and ended any imperial attempts to 'Amharize' the Somalis.

Ethiopia Reports 2 New Attacks By Somali in Border Conflict
The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973); Feb 10, 1964;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post
pg. A9

Ethiopia Reports 2 New Attacks By Somali in Border Conflict

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, Feb. 9 (UPI)—Somali forces, supported by tanks and heavy artillery, attacked two more Ethiopian border posts today in the nations' border conflict, Ethiopian officials said.

Fighting also raged at Tug Uagiale, where hostilities began yesterday, they said.

Emperor Haile Selassie called for an urgent emergency session of the Organization of African Unity. United Nations Secretary-General U. Thant, in a message to Selassie and Prime Minister Abdirashid Shermarke of Somalia, asked both sides to cease hostilities.

Each nation declared the border region in a state of emergency when fighting flared yesterday.

[From Mogadishu, the Somali capital, Reuters reported that President Aden Abdullah Osman extended the state of emergency to the whole of Somalia.]

The Ethiopian Ministry of Information said 100 Somali soldiers were killed and 200 wounded yesterday and 9 Ethiopians were killed and 44 wounded.

Ethiopia claimed the fighting began when Somalia troops attacked Tug Uagiale.

Somalia said Ethiopian troops began the attack with a mortar bombardment and the strafing support of a single airplane.

The two nations tangled in the same region in 1960, just after Somalian independence from Italy.

An Ethiopian Foreign Office spokesman said he hoped the Organization of African Unity would consider the "aggression by Somalia" this week at the ministerial council meeting at Dar Es Salaam, Tanganyika.

[Delegates from 29 countries will gather there, according to Reuters for a meeting called by Tanganyikan President Julius Nyerere to discuss the "grave danger" posed by unsuccessful army mutinies in the East African countries of Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda late last month.]

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Figure 14. Screenshot of Washington Post article reporting 1964 Somali-Ethio conflict.

7
2005 | Massacre in Kebri Dahar

> *"Killing people has simply become a habit with these [Ethiopian] soldiers. When they murder, rape, or rob, they're not punished according to law. Instead, they're rewarded or promoted... The only judge in Ogaden is a gun. The only lawyer is a gun. The prosecutor is a gun. And if you try to say anything about it, the gun gets you.*
>
> — Mohamed, a 46-year-old refugee from Qabridahar (Kebri Dahar) interviewed in Ifo refugee camp on Jan 4, 2006, by Project Muse)

Qabridahar (Kebri Dahar) holds special place in the hearts of Somalis. Located in the Qoraxey (Korahey) zone of the Somali region, it is a city with rich history. Along with Jigjiga, Dhagaxbuur and Mooyaale, Qabridahar was one of the few populated towns before 1930s in the whole of Somali region. These cities tended to serve as watering place before their urbanization in the 1930s. For example, Qabridahar was chartered as a town in 1934.

The Italians built one of their first military installments in Qabridahar in 1931. Their plan was more sinister: to establish a greater Italian East Africa empire. At the end of 1932 or so, there was a fight between Italian soldiers and Ethiopians at Qabridahar. A later clash in Wal Wal, a waterhole in Wardheer, between the Ethiopians and the Italians would give Italy the pretext it needed to fully invade Ethiopia in 1935. By November 7th, 1935, Italians moved through the Qoraxey plains (Korahe Plain) and towards Tog Faafan. When they

reached Jigjiga, they faced a more well-armed Ethiopian force and retreated back to Qabridahar. By the end of 1935, Italy's invasion of the Ogaden was complete, with Qabridahar as one of its main military garrisons.

After their invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36, the Italians excised the Ogaden from Ethiopia and combined it with their Southern Somali colony, creating a greater Somali Italiana administration. This completed their larger goal of creating Italian East Africa Empire consisting of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somali Italiana provinces, each with semi-autonomous governors in charge. Great Britain would immediately recognize the enlarged Italian empire although that was short-lived following the events of the Second World War.

Unlike other colonial powers, the Italians prided themselves in the development of their colonies. The Ethiopians, for instance, had always dealt with the Ogaden as a military outpost with limited interest to develop areas whose authority they claimed. In Qabridahar, the Italians built a hospital and airport runway – nothing fancy, just a runway which airplanes can land. As will see shortly, when Emperor Haile Selassie visited Qabridahar in 1956, he will use the airport built by the Italians to reach the city.

Old buildings the Italians built in Qabridahar. Photo on the left, Qabridahar Hospital: On the right, a building built and used by the Italians during their stay in Qabridahar (photos from author album; photos taken during a short-trip to Qabridahar in 2015).

More photos of buildings built and used by the Italians during their stay in Qabridahar (photos from author album; photos taken during a short-trip to Qabridahar in 2015).

More photos of buildings built and used by the Italians during their stay in Qabridahar (photos from author album; photos taken during a short-trip to Qabridahar in 2015).

In Jigjiga and throughout the areas they captured, the Italians abolished taxation, returned lands forcefully settled by Amharas to the Somalis, and constructed Harar-Jigjiga road that connected them to Mogadishu (about 1200-kilometer distance). The oldest mosque in Qabridahar was built during the Italian regime. Overall, the Italians engaged in developmental strategy that seemed to favor earning the trust of the Somalis as supposed to the security-driven agenda of the other trio of the colonial quartet (British, Italy, France, and Ethiopia). Nevertheless, fascist Italy pursued on the same token the colonial policies of its counterparts, including the discrimination and racist attitudes towards non-Italians and non-Europeans.

Following the 1955 handover of the Haud to Ethiopia, emperor Haile Selassie made a high-profile visit to Qabridahar in 1956 where he urged the Somalis to learn Amharic as "*lack of knowledge of the national language will be a barrier*." It appears his main agenda was to nip in the bud Somali orientations towards "Greater Somalia." On August 25, 1956, the Emperor and his entourage landed in Qabridahar with three airplanes from Diridhaba (Dire Dawa). Speaking at the airport where a dais had been erected for his speech, the emperor told the Somalis:

> "All of you are by race, color, blood and custom members of the great Ethiopian family… Differences in language often create misunderstanding and can seriously affect the responsibilities that are being bestowed on you… Our police whom we have sent among you have come to assist you in keeping order and security… It is our desire that schools will not only impact education, but also will foster understanding and cooperation among the military, the police and the civilian population…. Acquire the necessary education whereby you will be able to take over the various positions and responsibilities that await you in the Central Government Administration…. Lack of knowledge of the national language will be a barrier. You will now have a good chance to learn to read and write Amharic.

The elders handed him a petition asking for schools, clinics, roads, and wells. They also demanded government jobs and the appointment of locals to administrative positions. As reported by J. Markakis, they complained that "*from private to general, from doorman to minister, not a single Somali*" were to be found. To buy

their loyalty, he promised the opening of new schools and allocated eighth million Ethiopian birr for building elementary schools in the Ogaden.

On October 9, 1958, the emperor oversaw the ribbon cutting for Prince Makonnen primary school in Qabridahar and inspected a hospital there that was under construction. Prince Makonnen Junior Secondary School was also opened. The naming of the schools was significant. As noted by the social scientist R. Emmenegger, the naming of the schools after the imperial family (aka Makonnen) constituted '*territorial markers*' that embodied "*the imperial state's sovereign claim at its periphery.*" By 1968, Prince Makonnen Primary school in Qabridahar had an enrollment of about 258 boys and 81 girls, with *five Ethiopian teachers* (!). The numbers in Prince Makonnen Junior were much smaller: there were 20 boys and 2 girls in grades 7-8 and *two Ethiopian teachers*.

In early 1960, as British Somaliland and Somali Italiana gained their independence, Haile Selassie made series of government appointments intended to appease the Somalis and get ahead of Somali nationalism in the Somali region. J. Markakis summed up the government actions in this regard:

> The government made a series of appointments at the beginning of the 1960s. Three of the four *awraja* [zones] and some twenty-three *woreda* [districts] were put under Somali governors, and several more were appointed advisors to the provincial administration. Abdurahman Sheikh Abdi, a nephew of the rebel Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan, was later made Vice-Minister of the Interior. At the same time, Addis Ababa moved to strengthen its control in the southeastern lowlands. An Ogaden administrative region with Kebridahar [Qabridahar] as its capital was established, *Awraja* – Kebridahar, Degehbur, Kelafo, and Wardheer.

The Ethiopians appointed Suldaan Duulane Rafleh as the governor of Qabridahar. Garaad Makhtal Daahir was appointed to lead Dhagaxbuur. By early 1963, a new Ethiopian Ogaden administrator, Abebe Bimtew, ordered all the Somali region governors to collect animal tax. On the outskirts of Qabridahar, the Ogaadeeni chieftainess gathered to strategize on how to object the new order and

obtain weapons to protect their rights. As noted by Markakis, their "meeting was betrayed, and most of the participants were arrested when they returned" to town.

Institutionalized state violence will soon follow the arrests of elders in Qabridahar. Following the 1964 Somali-Ethio border skirmishes and the activities of the *Geesh* in the Ogaden, the imperial army will force city dwellers "to gather in the town center to look at the severed heads of" Cabdi Baarqab, Xirsi Xassan Bade, Hees Deglo, and others. As explained by T. Hagmann, the army "*used violence to discourage local populations from supporting the rebels*" and pursued "*counterinsurgency strategy directed against civilians*." Whatever the strategies, such abuses violate international laws of war.

During the TPLF reign over Ethiopia, Qabridahar was essentially a military town. All movements within and out of the town were under the watchful eye of TPLF units scattered around the city and its outskirts. During a short, two-day visit I made there in 2014, I found the whole situation unsettling in so many. As will be shown later, the relationship between the town's people and the Ethiopian army was mainly driven by the security needs of the Ethiopian soldiers. It was defined by an attitude of keep the Somalis at bay while making sure they are under the direct and complete control of the state. In a sense, I felt as though I stepped into a colony in which certain communities were not allowed to exist.

Following few weeks-long visit to Jigjiga, I made the short trip to Qabridahar by road to give my *salaams* (greetings) to aunts and uncles I have not seen in my life. I also wanted to pay tribute to the land of my ancestors. What surprised me at first was how easy it was to travel – it took us about four hours to reach the city by bus. The success of the road was testament to the "development" agenda and progress that successive Ethiopian regimes pursued ever since the imperial era as means to buy the loyalty of the locals without concomitant political progress. During his visit to Qabridahar in 1956, Emperor Haile Selassie promised building schools, roads, and hospitals and, as we have seen, delivered on those promises. The outcome of was 'Prince Makonnen Primary and Junior schools, with Somali students and Amhara teachers. Thus, beneath the veneer of the 'developmental progress' laid Amharization agenda. As we have

seen, the elders who met the emperor asked for schools, water wells, infrastructure, and such. The emperor compelled them to learn Amharic, the *Linga franca* of Ethiopia, and to learn about their Ethiopian roots as they were part of "Greater Ethiopian family."

During my short trip to Qabridahar, every block we walked we were stopped, asked to produce identification, say who we were, and to explain what we were unto. The 'security checks,' as they were called, were also common in Jigjiga but there was something nefarious about the Qabridahar security checks. As the relationship between soldiers and the locals was effectively defined by colonizer-colonized orientation, tensions were always simmering on the surface. One misstep on either side and violence was certain to erupt. This was the case in late 2005 when, on November 15, the Ethiopian army committed an ugly massacre in Qabridahar that claimed the lives of 36 civilians and wounded many more. The backstory to this massacre and its precipitating factor is baffling story.

On April 2005, the Ethiopian army rounded and imprisoned 39 people near the town of Shilaabo, including 18 wounded ONLF fighters. This followed a strong fight between the Ethiopian army and the ONLF in Shilaabo vicinity. A default response of the Ethiopian army to ONLF skirmishes has been to punish local communities in conflict zones, including arbitrary arrests and targeted killings.

The civilians and the ONLF members caught in Shilaabo were transported to Qabridahar where they were imprisoned. The conditions of the prison were unfathomable. Ayaan, a 24-year-old survivor of sexual violence in the Qabridahar prison, explained her ordeal in the prison to Project Muse who interviewed her in Djibouti. As Ayaan put it,

> Every day they made me sit out in the sun with no shade. They also took away my veil and gave it back only in the evening. In the sun, everything before my eyes paled. I could no longer distinguish one color from another.
>
> In Dig, where I had to sit in the sun, they gave me tea and two rolls in the morning that had to last for the entire day. *Sometimes if our relatives brought food, the guards ate it themselves*. Especially if no officer was around, the soldiers devoured our portions. In the Kebri Dahar prison, we went at times for twenty-

> four hours without anything to eat, and even when they gave us food, I couldn't swallow it. Sometimes I drank water, even though it was unhygienic. Once you've seen people pour the water they've bathed in back into the tank, you lose your desire for it. To shower and wash, that's okay, but for drinking? Disgusting. There was a real meal only once a day, either in the morning or at noon. In the evening, more often than not, nothing. Even if an officer was there, he had the food brought by relatives carefully inspected. Spaghetti, rice, and bread were picked apart.
>
> ⋮
>
> Kebri Dahar was the most painful. I was there for three nights when the guard told me to take off my clothes. I said "no," and "if you want to, go ahead and shoot me, but I'm not getting undressed." He slapped my face and insisted, "Get undressed!" I said, "no." So he threatened me, putting the barrel of his pistol against my temple. He then pushed me toward a dark area not far away, demanding to hear what I knew about the ONLF. I answered, "I don't know anything about them and don't know what you're talking about." He thought I was a native of the place and had the right to live freely. "But you have to tell me if you're with the ONLF or Al Itihad." I said, "All I can see is the Ethiopian military—I haven't seen anyone from ONLF or Al Itihad." From 9:00 pm to 1:00 am, he interrogated me.

Ayaan's experience was not isolated but typical. Human rights groups have documented numerous instances of sexual violence against women and girls. Human Rights Watch (HRW) specifically reported many times that

> Women taken into military custody as suspected ONLF spies or for providing the insurgents military support are frequently raped or otherwise sexually assaulted while being transported to or held in military camps. Soldiers have also assaulted and raped women and girls in urban areas as well

> as when they are collecting firewood, water, and other vital supplies in rural areas that the ENDF considers "closed."

Rape cases and sexual violence such as those reported by Ayaan from Qabridahar were common occurrence in Somali region prisons. Both men and women complained about abuse and mistreatment in the hands of Ethiopian soldiers in the Qabridahar prison. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) attempted several occasions to visit inmates in the Qabridahar prison to no vail.

On Monday, November 14th, the ONLF inmates and other prisons complained to the prison wardens about their ill treatment. They protested that unless their conditions were improved, they will complain to ICRC which was slated to visit them. In response, the inmates were told they will be taken to a training camp in northern Tigray where Ethiopia was engaged a border clash with Eritrea. This too was a common practice the Ethiopian government used to force civilians to become foot soldiers in its wars. The inmates refused to oblige.

On Tuesday afternoon, November 15, the prisoners were assembled in front of the prison to be transported to an unknown destination. Afraid that the government was really taking them to the Tigray border, the inmates protested. A chaos ensued. The prison wardens opened fire on the prisoners. Upon hearing the gun shots inside the prison, TPLF units from nearby military camps descended on the prison, indiscriminately killing and opening fire without regard to who they were shooting. This led to deadly stampede.

Among those who broke free were ten ONLF prisoners who sought refuge in a nearby home owned by a man named Cabdi Khalif Cali Weyd. The Ethiopian soldiers did not bother to enter the house and attempt to arrest the men but rather sprayed the whole house with bullets, killing all occupants. Two more prisoners were rounded up and shot near the town center. Five other prisons were reported to have been killed with machetes and gun bayonet.

On Wednesday, a day after the massacre, the Ethiopians soldiers collected the dead bodies of those who perished and ordered the towns folk to dig two mass graves. Some folks overcame with grieve could not help themselves but react. Unfortunately, the Ethiopian soldiers continued with their killing spree, murdering a young man who was among those digging the graves and wounded another.

The Ethiopian government did not deny the events of Qabridahar but dismissed it as common 'jailbreak incident' and 'something that

happens' even in the developed world. In a press statement, The ONLF found the Ethiopian claims incredulous. In their response, the organization wrote:

> With these facts on hand, it is hard to believe that the current despotic regime in Addis Ababa justified its criminal acts against innocent civilians and prisoners of war as something that does happen anywhere. Where in the civilized world except in despotic and militia led Ethiopia does this happen, we wonder? We, ONLF, remind this doomed and deranged regime that these criminal acts are not acceptable in a democratic and civilized society and cannot be dispended with such an arrogant and irresponsible statements spouted by the Ethiopian information ministry. Such utterances are the product of a mind accustomed to take the lives of innocent people with any compunction and then relish the experiences of watching others swallow its mendacious genuflections.

The ONLF went on to ask the international community and the UN human rights commission to bring to justice the criminals responsible for this heinous act:

> ONLF will pursue all international legal instruments available to the people of the Ogaden to bring the culprits to justice. This is not the first time this regime violated the lives, dignity and property of the Ogaden people, and it is time they are made accountable and brought to justice for their heinous crimes.

A partial list for the names of those massacred in Qabridahar include (names arranged alphabetically. Source: ONLF press release),

1. Amin Maxamed Cabdulaahi Dheere
2. Anwar Sheekh
3. Asad Maxamed Cabdulaahi
4. Bashir Maxamed Xasan
5. Cabdi Weli
6. Cabdicasis Muxumed
7. Cabdiraxmaan Xareed Calaaki

8. Cabdulaahi Axmed Maxamed
9. Cabdulaahi Axmed Caaqib
10. Cabdulaahi Gaani Cali
11. Carab Garwax
12. Geesh Colaad Muxumed
13. Maxamuud Maxamed
14. Raage Macalin
15. Shamsudiin Bashir
16. Siyaad Cirgax
17. Yuusuf Maxamed Aaden

Abdinur Warfa, a cousin of mine, vividly told me what he witnessed on that dreadful day. In his telling (translated from Somali):

> I was 5th grade in middle school when the massacre in Qabridahar occurred. On that day, during break time, couple of my friends and I left the school to swim in the lake (Toga). We jumped over the school wall, which was next to the prison where the ONLF guys were imprisoned. While walking by the prison wall, suddenly we heard the sounds of gunfire. The prison guard who was sitting on the wall we were walking by fell to the ground, bleeding. We ran back as the sound of gunfire got louder and multiplied. The TPLF had military camp just across the street from the school. Immediately, the TPLF army ran towards the prison while the students were running away from the school site.
>
> It was the worst day in my whole life. It is a day I will never forget. Seven men were randomly gunned down right in front of my eyes without any consideration if they were civilians or combatants, without regard to people who happened to be around the area.
>
> After dodging and jumping over here and there, I found my way back home. But there was no point! The military immediately conducted house search of the whole city and gathered everyone in a stadium next to the military camp.

> I was a young boy shook by gunfire and fear but then found the army with their guns drawn in the very home I sought refuge. The events left me with immeasurable hatred. I still have nightmares about that day and woke up multiple times dreaming about the events of that day.

The massacre in Qabridahar left a deep scar on the collective memory of Somali people in the region. Like my cousin Abdinur, it had traumatized many. Mohamed, a 46-year-old from Qabridahar who was interviewed at Ifo Refugee Camp in Kenya by Project Muse in 2006, just a year after the Qabridahar massacre, summed it up well:

> Our lives are colonized by anxiety and fear. That part of your body that cradles joy—we don't have it anymore. We've grown numb. I'm old and death is waiting for me. People in Ogaden wouldn't be fleeing if only our basic rights were assured—the right to water, health, education, and commerce—although commerce is less important. We aren't on the run because of hunger, or in search of a better life in a nation that's not our own. In fact, we have a beautiful country and the best weather. No. We're refugees because in Ogaden we have no peace.

Ayaan who we saw early put more poignantly her lived experience in Qabridahar to Project Muse:

> Kebri Dahar is my home, but I couldn't stay and move around freely. Whenever I visited, I had to hide. Nobody but my mother was allowed to know that I had entered the village, and only she could see my face. Trusting even my own brothers and sisters was out of the question. I was arrested six times.

Hers was a description of a colony controlled by the gun. People lived under constant anxiety and fear. It was a city that epitomized the very essence of state control, violence and repression.

8
2007 | Burnt Villages in Doolo

> "*The Ethiopian troops are destroying villages, confiscating livestock, forcing civilians to relocate, and destroying harvest and other food stocks intended for the civilian population.... whatever the military strategy behind them, these abuses violate the laws of war.*"
>
> — Peter Takirambudde, Africa Director of Human Rights Watch

From Menelik to Meles, the burning of villages and the forced displacement of civilians has been a common practice employed by the Ethiopian army, past and present. As will be shown, nowhere was this more apparent than Wardheer and its environs in the Doolo zone of the Somali region.

In early 2008 Human Rights Watch (HRW) teamed with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to corroborate witness accounts of village burnings and forced displacements in the Somali region. The accounts were from interviews, conducted by HRW in Kenya and Somalia, of survivors of the alleged crimes. To corroborate the eyewitness accounts, the AAAS used geospatial satellite image technology to produce 'before' and 'after' satellite images of reportedly burned villages or geographical displacements. As will be shown, the HRW and AAAS reports revealed massive governmental abuse of power against innocent civilians.

Doolo has always hosted Somali freedom fighters. We have already seen how in 1963 Garaad Makhtal Daahir and three hundred

of his compatriots gathered in Hodayo, a city on the north of Wardheer, to establish the first indigenous Somali region liberation front: the *Geesh*. It was there that on June 16, 1963, the *Geesh* announced what Garaad Makhtal called the "liberation government." They would go on to establish four operational sectors across the Somali region, each sector "commanded by natives" of the operational area. For example, Suldaan Duulane Rafle was to command the Qoraxey sector. Thus, Hodayo in the Doolo zone was the birthplace of the first indigenous Somali region liberation front.

In the most recent times, the ONLF had a strong presence in Doolo and often sought refuge in the mountains of Wardheer. In fact, it was in Wardheer that the TPLF tried to assassinate the former chief of the ONLF, the late Sheekh Ibraahim Cabdalla. Sheekh Ibraahim was among the founders of the party and its chairman from 1991 to 1998. His chairmanship in 1991 coincided with the fall of the *Derg* and the accession of TPLF to power.

Under Sheekh Ibraahim's watch, the ONLF decided to participate in post-1991 Ethiopian elections. However, when it became apparent that the ethnic-federalism proposed by TPLF was nothing more than a hollow promise on paper, the ONLF decided to pull out. The Ethiopian government responded in kind and attacked their headquarters. In February 1994, the government tried to assassinate Sheekh Ibraahim in Wardheer. The people of Wardheer came to his aide and stood in defiance. As a result, more than 80 civilians lost their lives. It was a massacre that foretold how things were to be under TPLF rule.

The menacing events of Wardheer against Sheekh Ibraahim and the ONLF unmasked TPLF's real goals of ruling Ethiopia with iron fist despite constitutional guarantees it championed for in post-*Derg* Ethiopia. In fact, the ONLF naively took to heart article 39 of the new Ethiopian constitution thinking the TPLF was genuine in its support for self-governance, recognition of nation-state aspirations, or devolution of power. This was not to be.

Reminiscent of previous regime behaviors, the TPLF-led EPRDF enacted top-down strategy faithfully employed ever since the imperial era. For example, "regional presidents became perishable commodities," as noted by Mohamud H. Khalif and Martin Doornbos. Upon disagreement with the ONLF, TPLF immediately sacked Cabdulaahi Maxamed Sacdi, the first duly elected President of

the Somali region, and replaced him with Xassan Jire Qalinle. As Khalif & Doornbos, wrote:

> Saadi's replacement was Hassan Jireh Qalinle, who assumed power on 10 August 1993. However, Hassan was discarded soon after the regional assembly of the Somali State voted unanimously, in February 1994, for the idea that the Somalis in Ethiopia exercise their right to self-determination and decide their fate through a referendum.

True to character, the call for referendum and cessation, a right guaranteed in the new constitution, was too much for the TPLF. Consequently, like his predecessor, Xassan Qalinle was removed from office and detained without trial. His replacement, Cabdiraxmaan Ugaas Muxumed-Qani, will suffer the same fate. After a little over a year at the helm of the region, he too was also imprisoned and replaced by Axmed Makaahiil Xuseyn. After four months and some days, Axmed was replaced by Ciid Daahir. Ciid's fate was no better – he too was jailed and removed from office after two years. And so went the merry-go-round of presidential appointees in the Somali region. In the words of Khalif and Doornbos,

> By now it had become clear that the electoral process and the initial democratic pronouncements of the EPRDF regime were little more than cosmetic window dressing exercises … Evidently, regional Presidents in the Somali region all seem to run into the same kinds of predicament with the central government in Addis Ababa.

The Wardheer attack on Sheekh Ibraahim Cabdalla was thus on bar with what one would have expected from a government that viewed the Ogaden periphery as nothing more than an area to be controlled militarily. Khalif and Doornbos put it the best, "*from the political centre in Addis Ababa the Somalis have usually been treated as peripheral and second-class citizens, regarded at best with relative neglect, though more commonly with a good deal of suspicion*."

The precipitating factor for the village burning events in Doolo was an earlier ONLF attack on Chinese oil and gas company installation in Cobale, near Dhagaxbuur in April 2007. Prior to this surprise attack, the ONLF carried out mostly hit-and-run operations reminiscent of the *Geesh* strategy of 1960s. Their 2007 Cobale attack signaled an escalation of the conflict and presented a major embarrassment for the Ethiopian government and its intentions to sell oil in the Ogaden basin. Nine Chinese employees and at least sixty-five Ethiopian soldiers and oil workers were killed. The Ethiopian government responded by pursuing the true-and-tested military strategy of 'total war' across the Somali region. The 'total war' strategy, as noted by T. Hagmann:

> Authorized Ethiopian soldiers stationed in the region to perpetrate a variety of abuses: the killing of civilians in retaliation for ONLF attacks or as a way of discouraging local populations from supporting the rebels; coercing villagers to denounce the ONLF or other 'anti-peace' elements; forcing individuals to act as informants; arresting, interrogating, and torturing thousands of Ogaadeeni civilians Ethiopian security forces suspected of aiding the rebels; securing bribes in exchange for the release of civilian detainees; raping women and girls as a way of humiliating their communities; killing ONLF fighters and displaying their bodies in public places; controlling population movements; intimidating the traditional authorities, civil servants and traders; and cutting-off villages and towns from their food supplies.

It was against this background the Ethiopian army carried out widespread attacks on civilians and villages that amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In a report it released on June 2008, HRW noted:

> Ethiopian troops have forcibly displaced entire rural communities, ordering villagers to leave their homes within a few days or witness their houses being burnt down and their possessions destroyed—and risk death. Over the past year, Human Rights Watch has

> documented the execution of more than 150 individuals, many of them in demonstration killings, with Ethiopian soldiers singling out relatives of suspected ONLF members or making apparently arbitrary judgments that individuals complaining to soldiers or resisting their orders are ONLF supporters. These executions have sometimes involved strangulation, after which their bodies are left lying in the open as a warning, for villagers to bury. The information confirmed by Human Rights Watch is only a glimpse of what is taking place—real figures are likely to be higher.

Among the survivors HRW interviewed was someone who witnessed the razing of Qamuuda, a village within the vicinity of Wardheer town. The eyewitness recalled what happened in his village when the Ethiopian military arrived there in the wee hours of the day:

> When Qamuuda was burned, I was there. It is about 30 houses. It was alleged ONLF visited the village. They entered on that morning and burned around 8 a.m. and left around 3 p.m. They used fuel they found in the village to burn by setting fire. I saw ONLF in Qamuuda several times. They were carrying guns, came out of the bush. When Qamuuda was burned, the ONLF came there just before the burning.

It appears the Ethiopian reaction was retaliatory in nature for the ONLF activity in the area. That is, the burnings were intended to send message to the locals who may have been sympathetic to the ONLF. Satellite images obtained by AAAS confirmed the eyewitness's account of Qamuuda burnings. In their report, AAAS noted that when an image of Qamuuda from 2008 (see figure 15A) was compared to an earlier image from 2006 (figure 15B), there was clear evidence for the likely removal or damage of about 85 structures, consistent with alleged claims of village burnings.

Image analysis showed multiple other villages and towns burnt to the ground. In Dameeray, a small village within the vicinity of Wardheer, the image analysis showed the entire houses of the village, about 65, removed or damaged (figure 16). HRW could not confirm

the witness's testimony with other eyewitness accounts. The AAAS satellite imagery analysis corroborated his story.

A. 2006 Image of Qamuuda ***B. 2008 Image Qamuuda***

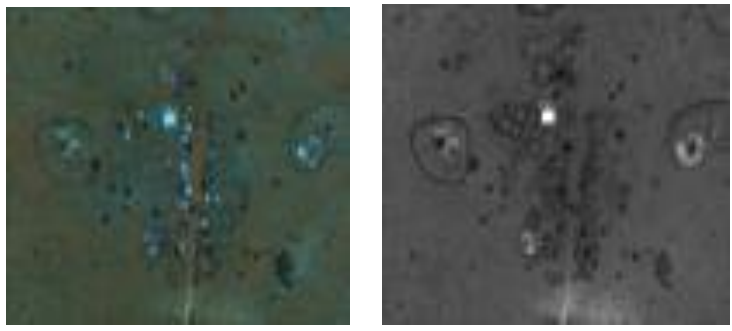


Fig 15. Before (2006, figure on the left, A) and (2008, figure on the right, B) satellite image obtained by American Association for the Advancement of Science, AAAS, Human Right's Project shows the removal or the possible damage of 85 structures in the village of Qamuuda in the Shabelle zone but within the vicinity of Wardheer (Image © 2008 DigitalGlobe, AAAS, used with permission).

A. 2006 Image of Dameeray ***B. 2008 Image Dameeray***

Fig 16. Before (2006, figure on the left, A) and (2008, figure on the right, B) satellite image obtained by American Association for the Advancement of Science, AAAS, Human Right's Project shows the removal or the possible damage of 65 structures in the village of Dameeray in the Wardheer zone (Image © 2008 DigitalGlobe, AAAS, used with permission).

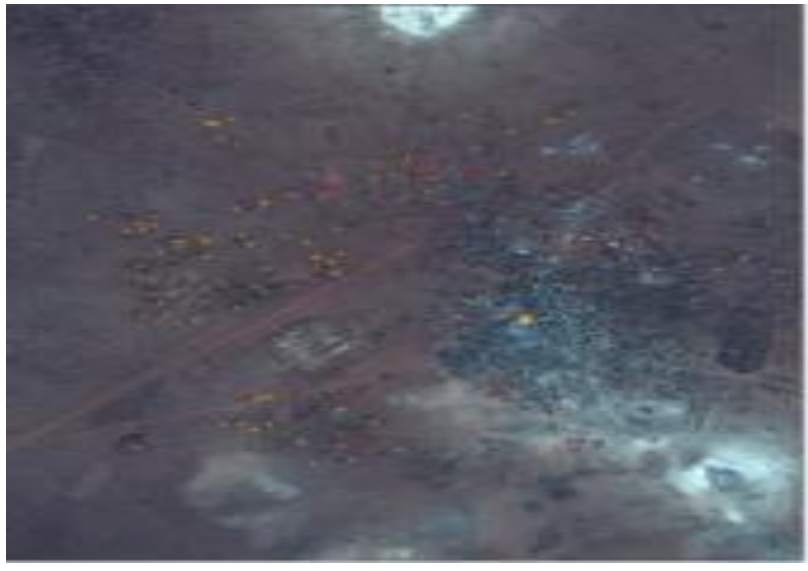


Fig 17. Before (February 2006) and after (December 2007) satellite images of Wardheer. Yellow dots indicate structures while red dots indicate new structures added in that same period. (Image © 2008 DigitalGlobe, AAAS, used with permission).

In the same report, HRW reported that the Ethiopian army and regional authorities removed most of the rural population of Wardheer and villages in its vicinity in late May and early June 2007. The AAAS analysis corroborated this too. In Wardheer town itself, a comparison of before (February 2006) and after (December 2007) satellite images showed the removal and addition of new structures in a pattern that was consistent with reports of forced relocations (figure 17). This was not new. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, successive Ethiopian regimes have always resorted to village burnings and forced relocations as a military strategy to sniffle support for liberation fronts and as a mechanism to control local populations. During the TPLF era, HRW noted,

> In an attempt to cut off civilian support to the ONLF and concentrate its rural support base in designated larger villages and towns, Ethiopia's scaled up counterinsurgency campaign against the ONLF has involved widespread forced displacement, particularly between June and August 2007. The

> government has ordered civilians to relocate from small villages and pastoralist settlements to designated towns throughout the conflict-affected zones, typically ordering the villagers and nomads to move within two to seven days. To secure compliance with the evacuation orders, the Ethiopian army repeatedly implemented a phased system of terror involving the confiscation and killing of livestock, public executions, and the destruction of villages by burning.

Village burnings and forced displacements were therefore a common practice employed by the Ethiopian army ever since the imperial era. T. Hagmann has argued elsewhere that despite being aware of how heavy-handed counter-insurgency tactics such as those described here strengthen popular support among natives, Meles's TPLF "*applied very similar counter-insurgency tactics in 2007 and 2008 against the ONLF rebels and the Ogaadeen population*" as did the *Derg* regime. For example, in addition to Qamuuda, Dameeray and Wardheer, several other towns and villages in Doolo faced similar face.

In the town of Lahelow alone, a district in southern Doolo, over five thousand residents were forcefully removed from their homes to the city of Wardheer where no shelters or residences existed. Many internally displaced people still live in squalid huts made of plastic bags on the city's outskirts. Villages such as Hararaf, Neef Kuceliye, and Xodala Dheere were some of the other villages burnt down.

In addition to village burnings and forced displacement, Doolo has seen its fair share of indiscriminate firing and extra-judicial killings. In 2004, TPLF forces opened fire on a civilian truck traveling between Hararaf and Ubataale, carrying over 50 civilians including children, clan elders and women. Over dozen were killed in the incident and two dozen or so injured. Some of the elders killed that day included elders returning from a conference in the area to make a peace between two warring clans.

Other killings and incidents abound in Doolo. In 2012, 13 civilians, including women and elders, were mercilessly killed by the TPLF in the village of Qoriile. In Lahelow, it killed dozens of people for simply refusing to fight the ONLF, a common tactic it pursued since 2007. Disappearance and kidnapping of civilians were a daily

occurrence at the peak of the conflict in 2007. For example, seven prominent businesspeople, including Cabdi Baari, then the Wardheer representative of Kaah Express (a leading money transfer service in the region), were kidnapped by the TPFL forces. Even as of now, no one knows the fate of the Wardheer seven.

The human rights violations in Doolo exemplify the typical military strategy the Ethiopian army employed throughout the Somali region during TPLF's reign. Similar village burnings, forced displacement, extra-judicial killing and sexual violence have been reported in all Ogaden conflict zones—from Faafan to Shabelle, Nogob and Erer, Qoraxey to Sitti, and all. None appears to have been saved from the collective punishment of the Ethiopian national army

Part III

Winds of Change

9
2012 | Prelude to a Change

There will be moments when
You will bloom fully, then
Wilt, only to bloom again.
If we can learn anything from
Flowers it is that resilience is born
Even when we feel like we are
dying
— Alex Elle

"But how do we fashion the future? Who can say how except in the minds of those who will call it Now?"
— Miller Williams

In late 2012, several attempts were made to broker a peace deal between ONLF and the Ethiopian government. Multiple meetings were held in September and October in Nairobi, Kenya. All came to a naught, owing to several factors. For one, Ethiopia had no real incentive to reach a meaningful peace deal with an organization whose stars were falling. For quite some time, it was obvious to those of us on the outside that ONLF had lost its footing in the struggle for self-determination and failed to come up alternatives for its stagnation.

The strength of ONLF has always been its military capability and uncompromising persistence on self-determination. However, the creation of the *Liyu* police (special paramilitary police force) changed the political calculus in the region significantly. Ever since the *Liyu* came into the scene, ONLF capabilities were significantly weakened.

This made sense since the *Liyu* police were entirely made of fellow ethnic Somalis, putting the ONLF between a rock and hard place: turn their guns against their own or limit their military activities. This contrasted with the previous phases of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict in which the ONLF mainly faced soldiers from the Ethiopian highlands, not Somalis. Now, the Liyu police, entirely made of Somalis, were at the forefront of Ethiopia's counter-insurgency activities, pitting a brother against another.

Tobias Hagmann, a scholar of the Somali region, had referred to the Ethiopian outsourcing of counter-insurgency activities to the Liyu police as "indigenization" of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict. Describing the process of *indigenization*, Hagmann wrote:

> *Historically, counterinsurgency campaigns by the Ethiopian state pitched predominantly non-Somali military personnel against local Somali populations. In the last three years, however, both the perpetrators of violence and its victims have been mostly Somalis. After the Abole attack in 2007, most Ethiopian government repression had been carried out by the federal ENDF, but from 2010 onwards, the liyu police—the regional militia composed of ethnic Somalis, mostly Ogaadeeni—has been running counter-insurgency activities against the ONLF and its supporters. (Hagmann, 2014, p26).*

It also did not help the notorious Cabdi Iley was at the helm of the region. Iley has built his entire career on fighting the ONLF. In fact, the *Liyu* police were created in 2009 while Iley was the head of the regional security. When he took over the regional presidency in July 2010, Iley staked his survival on the demise of the ONLF. He thus worked overtime to weaken the ONLF, if not destroy it for good. The *Liyu* police became his go-to tool to conduct counter-insurgency against the ONLF, harass those accused of being sympathetic to the ONLF cause, and conduct large-scale abuses against the civilians.

The 2012 ONLF-Ethiopia peace talks could not have worked under the circumstances they were conducted. In fact, most observers and non-ONLF Somalis were mostly on the opinion that the Ethiopian government was mainly interested in offering the ONLF a retirement mechanism that would allow its members to return safely to the region, receive certain economic benefits, and gradually get integrated into the Ethiopian society. Nothing more, nothing less. As

noted by Hagmann (2014), the interests of the Ethiopian government during the talks were very straightforward:

> *The Ethiopian government is interested in a deal that neutralizes the already weakened Ogaadeeni insurgency, deprives its arch-enemy Eritrea of a proxy, and prepares the ground for more investments and oil exploration in Ethiopia's Somali region*. (*Page 9*)

It did not help that ONLF did not pivot to adopt new policies but remained stuck in its old ways. As early as March of 2012, some six months before the September-October peace negotiations, the death of Meles Zenawi in August, and following an inconsequential deal with the smaller United Western Somali Liberation Front (UWSLF) of Ibrahim Dheere in 2010, some of us thought ONLF fortunes were dwindling. The organization needed to re-invent itself but were incapable of doing so.

The *Liyu*-ONLF clashes changed the dynamics of the Ethio-Somali conflict in other significant ways. For example, it created a populace weary of prolonged struggle. To those of us on the outside looking in, the ONLF needed to transfer itself into an all-inclusive entity of the whole Somalis from the region, engage Ethiopian opposition groups to forge a common front even if that amounted to compromising on the question of self-determination to a certain degree, and, argued some, even go as far as forming a temporary alliance with Ethiopia's Amhara base.

One maybe forgiven to think it is a cardinal sin to even entertain the idea of compromising on the question of self-determination. The thinking among Somali intellectuals at the time was to prioritize the removal of Prime Minister Meles from office and ending Iley's choke hold on the region at all costs. If an alliance with the Amhara base was to lead to such outcome, it was worth a try. If a tactical compromise on self-determination were to lead to such outcome, it was worth a try. Moreover, the abuses of Abdi Iley and the TPLF regime was much worse than anything else one could have imagined. So went the thinking. If self-determination or living in democratic Ethiopia was not an option, attaining full regional autonomy would have been a better alternative.

More fundamental issues were at work as well. To most observers, not the hardcore supporters of ONLF, the writing was on the wall: the organization was a damaged good and needed to change

course. Its clashes with the liyu police, and a relentless campaign by Cabdi Iley that casted the ONLF as the root cause of the Somali region problems tired the masses and took a toll on local communities. ONLF supporters were silently demanding the organization chart new ways of doing politics. That was not to be. The party stuck to its guns and old ways of doing business.

The Ethiopian government, on the other hand, used everything under the sky to weaken and delegitimize the organization. Members of ONLF and citizens suspected of being sympathetic to the cause or having relatives in the ONLF faced arbitrary arrests, execution, torture, and disappearance. That is, the Ethiopian authorities did not make any distinction between civilians and the ONLF members. All Somalis were to face the same punitive measures. As noted by Hagmann (2014),

> *Counter-insurgency campaigns do not distinguish between combatants and civilians and treating entire populations as enemies tends to produce more opposition to the government. Authorities have restricted the mobility of people and livestock, denied them access to food and water, and used violence to send a threatening message to the general population.*

In fact, like the raids carried out by imperial Ethiopian soldiers, members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), stationed in garrison towns around the major cities in the Somali region carried what could only be described as "modern raids." In these raids, the Ethiopian army did not confiscate livestock as did the imperial army but carried out civilian killings in retaliation for ONLF attacks, coerced villages to denounce the organization, forced individuals to act as informants, displayed publicly bodies of ONLF fighters they killed, and instituted total lockdown of towns and cities. An eyewitness account of an interview given to the Human Rights Watch (HWR) may be instructive. Here, the victim describes the events surrounding a massacre he survived:

> *The Ethiopian soldiers came with a list of names and then took a number of villagers. They beat us indiscriminately, torched our hunts and then hanged some of us from acacia trees, while others were choked with metal rods and rope one by one. When it was my turn, two soldiers grabbed me*

> *and tied a rope around my neck. They pulled in different directions until I collapsed. They left me for dead but thanks God I am still alive.*

Similar acts of torture and coercion across the region have been collaborated by countless number of eyewitnesses interviewed by human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

On top of the relentless Ethiopian abuse, the military and security apparatus within the Ethiopian government established patron-client relationship with Cabdi Iley. Chiefly, the patron-client relations were between Iley and General Samora Yunis and Major General Abraha Wolde Maria of Ethiopia's Eastern Army Command. During a short visit to Jigjiga in 2014, it was apparent to me that there was an open secret everyone knew: Cabdi Iley used state budget to inflame anti-ONLF sentiments but also pay the Generals in the Ethiopian army and members of the Ethiopian security apparatus. Using the state coffers, Cabdi Iley pursued two-pronged policy of suppressing the ONLF but also paying the Ethiopian army and security apparatus. Hagmann (2014) described this phase of the Ethiopian policy towards the Somali region as "securitization" of the region's politics:

> *There is despotic and personalized rule, and a new set of security-driven patron–client relationships. The securitization of the region's politics started with the Ethiopian military and was driven by both its counter-insurgency agenda and the government's need to protect oil and gas fields. The Ogaden basin is divided into 21 energy blocks with the most significant deposits in the Kalub and Hilala gas field in the Shilabo area. In recent years, Petronas (Malaysia), Sinopec (China), Africa Oil Corp/Lundin (Sweden), and Southwest Energy (Ethiopia), have all explored oil and gas reserves in the SRS.*

A direct consequence of the region's securitized politics was apparent division within the ranks of ONLF and extremely polarized Somali citizenry. Unfortunately, the ONLF did not pivot to address the gathering storm and stuck to what it has been doing since its founding. This diminished its fortunes among the masses.

Aware that the ONLF was a weakened entity, perhaps even a dying breed, the Ethiopian government was not willing to resolve the Ogaden issue just because. Rather, the military and the security apparatus within the Ethiopian government smelled blood on the ground. Of the delegate sent to Nairobi to negotiate with the ONLF, the most visible and dominant members of the Ethiopian delegate were members of the TPLF security apparatus.

The "Declared Principles" of the September ONLF-Ethiopia talks are appended to the end of this chapter. The Declaration document shows all those who were present for the meeting. The Ethiopian delegate consisted of senior military and intelligence officials, led by Defense Minister Mr. Siraj Fegessa and the infamous Brigadier General Gebre Adhana, referred to in Somali circles as "*The Butcher of Mogadishu*" or simply as "Gebre." From those leading the Ethiopian delegation, it was obvious that despite the intentions of former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, the military and the security apparatus were at the forefront of the talks. The ONLF was represented by their Foreign Secretary, Mr. Abdirahman Mahdi, currently the chairman of the organization, and was accompanied by six other members. The main agenda of the talks were to reach "peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Ogaden," and agreed upon issues to discuss included political issues, security, human rights and humanitarian issues, and economic/natural resources.

The September ONLF-Ethiopian meetings occurred on the 6th and 7th and were facilitated by a Kenyan team handpicked by former President of Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki. The Kenyan delegation was led by the late Mohamed Yusuf Haji, then the Minister of State for Kenya (see appendix at the end of the chapter). Per ONLF, the September meetings were essentially setting the ground rules for future meetings. On Sept 8th, the ONLF released the following press statement describing the Sept 6th and 7th meetings:

ONLF Press Release

Sept 8, 2012

Delegates from the Ogaden National Liberation Front and the Ethiopian government held talks in Nairobi, Kenya on the September 6t and 7th 2012, facilitated by a Kenyan team designated by the President of Kenya, HE Mwai Kibaki. Mr.

Abdirahman Mahdi, the Foreign Secretary of the Ogaden National Liberation Front, led the ONLF delegation from the Somalis in Ogaden. The Ethiopian delegation was led by the Defense Minister of Ethiopia HE Siraj Fegessa. HE Mohamed Yusuf Haji, the Minster of State and Ag Minister for Provincial Administration and Internal Security of Kenya led the facilitation team.
After exchanging opening statements presented by the head of the delegations, the two sides agreed on the modalities of the negotiation process, the general principles that would be the basis of resolving the conflict and the initial agenda, with the facilitation of the Kenyan team.

The general principles agreed upon that would be the basis for resolving the conflict is:

1. Formal negotiations between the Ethiopian government and ONLF shall be held to resolve the conflict.
2. The common goal of the afore mentioned negotiations shall be the attainment of a just and lasting peace.
3. Such negotiations shall be comprehensive and address the substantive issues that are the root causes of the conflict.
4. The holding of negotiations must be in accordance with mutually acceptable principles and no preconditions shall be made to negate the inherent character and purpose of the peace negotiation.
5. The substantive agenda of the peace negotiations shall include issues that will facilitate the implementation of any peace agreement
6. Both parties shall agree to specific measures of goodwill and confidence building to create a favorable climate for the negotiations

> Finally, the parties agreed on the date of the next meeting to be held in Kenya.
>
> Issued by: The Ogaden National Liberation Front."

The contours of the meetings were thus very positive. However, reading between the lines, it is obvious there was a general lack of goodwill and confidence among the parties. Each party appeared to be reserved and hold their cards close to their chest. For instance, there was overt emphasis on avoiding "preconditions" and issues that may throw a wrench in the talks. Suspicions seemed to fill the air. Nevertheless, the two parties agreed to continue talking and meet a month later, in October 2012.

As was widely reported in the popular press, the October talks, held between the 15th and the 17th, stumbled before they even began. Contrary to what was agreed upon during the September talks, the Ethiopian delegate, led by General Gebre and now General Abraha Wolde Mariam of the Eastern Command, insisted on preconditions presumably designed to sabotage the talks. A chronicle of the Ethiopian demands included the following:

1. During the first day of the talks, Oct 15th, the Ethiopian delegate argued the Somali region was one of many federal states defined on grounds of ethnicity and therefore Somali Region representatives should be present for the talks. To that end, they brought with them a confidant of Abdi Iley to the meeting. The ONLF objected to his presence or the very idea of negotiating with anyone from the regional administration. In the end, Iley's confidant was excluded from the talks.
2. In the second day, the Ethiopian delegate opened the meeting with the condition that ONLF must first accept the Ethiopian constitution before the talks can proceed. This was essentially a "no go." There and then, it was obvious the October talks were going nowhere.
3. On the third day of the meeting, the Ethiopian delegate announced they will leave the talks unless ONLF accepts the Ethiopian constitution as a framework for further talks. The ONLF rejected and the meeting ended as such.

The Ethiopian government's position was contrary to the earlier agreement in September that "*no preconditions shall be made to*

disrupt the peace negotiation." From the get-go it was obvious the Ethiopian delegate intended to sabotage the talks. Some observers, such as Tobias Hagmann, viewed the Ethiopian demand that ONLF accept the constitution as precondition for all negotiations as a "*coded invitation to the ONLF to surrender*." Hagmann also viewed the composition of the Ethiopian delegation, especially its military bias, *"as a deliberate attempt by the Ethiopian security apparatus to sabotage the talks*." The talks were therefore unlikely to succeed.

While the talks went nowhere, there were important takeaways. For one, there was a sense the ONLF was willing to compromise on the question of self-determination. This presented a softening on a hardened position. The talks themselves suggested it was possible to solve the Ethio-Somali conflict peacefully if the warring parting agreed to talk to each other genuinely. Therefore, all hope was not lost even when the talks failed to produce positive outcome. In a sense, the failed talks of 2012 set the stage for 2018 ONLF-Ethiopian agreement, the subject of the next chapter.

A photo taken during the 2012 ONLF-Ethiopia peace talks in Nairobi, Kenya shows members of the ONLF such as Cabdiraxmaan Mahdi (second from right), Cabdi Iley of the Somali region (fifth from the right), members of the Kenyan hosts such as the late Yuusuf Xaaji (fourth from the right), and General Gebre, the butcher of Mogadishu (first from the left). Others shown include Kenyan MP Yuusuf Xassan-Nuur Indhagamuun and the governor of Garissa County, Kenya (photo credit: Publicly released by Kenyan facilitators in the meeting for public consumption).

Chapter 9 Appendix: Declaration of Principles of the 2012 ONLF-Ethiopian meeting held at Nairobi, Kenya on September 6th, and 7th.

PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA AND THE OGADEN NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (ONLF) FACILITATED BY THE KENYA FACILITATION TEAM - NAIROBI, KENYA

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

We, representatives of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (hereinafter referred to as the FDRE) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (hereinafter referred to as ONLF):

Cognisant of the importance of the unique opportunity of facilitation afforded by the Kenyan facilitation team to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict in the Ogaden;

Concerned by the negative consequences of the conflict in the Ogaden in Ethiopia;

Hereby agree to the following Declaration of Principles (DOP) that would constitute the basis for resolving the conflict;

- Formal negotiations between the Ethiopian government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front shall be held to resolve the conflict;
- The common goal of the afore mentioned negotiations shall be the attainment of a just and lasting peace;
- Such negotiations shall be comprehensive and address the substantive issues that are the root causes of the conflict;
- The holding of negotiations must be in accordance with mutually acceptable principles and no preconditions shall be made to negate the inherent character and purpose of the peace negotiations;
- The substantive agenda of the peace negotiations shall include issues that will facilitate the implementation of any peace agreement;
- Both parties shall agree to specific measures of goodwill and confidence building in order to create a favourable climate for the negotiations;

Parties agreed that the date of the next meeting will be on the 8th of October 2012 in Kenya.

1

Parties agreed on the following agenda and issues:

AGENDA

- Peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Ogaden

ISSUES

- Political issue
- Security
- Human rights and humanitarian issue
- Economic/Natural resources

This declaration was agreed on 7th day of September 2012 by:

Head of delegation - Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Hon Siraj Fegessa - Minister for Defence, Ethiopia

Signed..... **Date:** 7 Sep 2012

Head of delegation - Ogaden National Liberation Front

Hon Abdirahman Mohamed Mahdi - Foreign Secretary, ONLF

Signed:..... **Date:** Sept 7, 2012

Witnessed by the chair of the Kenyan facilitation team

Hon Mohamed Yusuf Haji - Minister of State for Defence and Ag Minister for Provincial Administration and Internal Security, Kenya

Signed:..... **Date:** 7th September 2012.

2

The Delegation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE):

1. Hon Siraj Fegessa - Head of delegation
2. Gebre Adhana
3. Zeynu Jemal
4. Alemu Kitata
5. Mesfin Awulachew
6. Sabir Keda
7. Kassa Melaku

The Delegation of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF):

1. Hon Abdirahman Mohamed Mahdi - Head of delegation
2. Mohamud Abass
3. Ahmed Abdi Yassin
4. Ahmed Gurhan
5. Hassan Ali Moalim
6. Mohamud Ugaas Muhumed
7. Sulub Abdi Ahmed

The Kenya Government Facilitation Team:

1. Hon Mohamed Yusuf Haji - Chair
2. Hon Mohamed Abdi Affey
3. Hon Yusuf Hassan Abdi
4. Ali Bunow Korane

3

10
2018 | New Beginnings

We are only haunted
By the things
We refuse
To accept
— Bridgett Devoue

"*Jail Ogaden is unthinkable. From the moment you are put there until the moment you are released, you do not know if you are alive or dead. You are tortured and humiliated day and night, you are starved, [and] you can't sleep because there's so many people.*"

— As told to HRW in 2007 by 42-year-old man who spent five years without charge in Jail Ogaden

If 1948 was the most consequential year in the history of the Somali region as suggested in Chapter 2, 2018 was another. The number of events with direct consequence for the region in 2018 were remarkably breathtaking. In fact, one could argue this was the more consequential of the years. That is, several significant events happened in 2018 that would shape the region in new ways the earlier events have not.

In 2018, a painful decade of fear and terror under the leadership of Cabdi Iley would end. The notorious Jail Ogaden, otherwise officially known as Jigjiga Central Prison, where thousands were tortured, brutalized, and neglected, would close. Following the failed peace talks of 2012, ONLF would at last cease its armed struggle. A

new generation of leaders will take the helm of the Somali region. Thus, 2018 marked the end of the armed struggle for self-determination and the beginning of new ways of doing politics in the region.

Eight years before the ONLF ceased its armed struggle, the United Western Somalia Liberation Front (UWSLF), a small and religious-based liberation front, reached a peace deal with Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia on June 10, 2010. That agreement left the ONLF as the only remaining armed opposition party in the region. We have already seen how attempts to broker peace deal between ONLF and the Ethiopian government floundered in 2012. However, such peace deal became a possibility in 2018 due to several propitious events.

The most important event that shaped the politics of the region in 2018 happened when the Oromo *Qeerroo* movement, a youth-led popular uprising that presented Oromo struggle for more political freedom and for greater ethnic representation in federal structures, brought down the EPRDF to its knee. The movement ended a 27-year TPLF supremacy over Ethiopia as Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned. On April 2nd, 2018, the Ethiopian parliament anointed Abiy Ahmed as Ethiopia's newest Prime Minister. In response to the yearning of *Qeerroo* and overall national discontent, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed promised wide ranging political reforms.

The ONLF, along with most Somalis, remained skeptical of the new Ethiopian transition and what it meant. There was not much expected of Abdi Iley and the regional administration as their relationship with Addis Ababa was solely driven by patron-client relations. Thus, most anticipation involved how the ONLF would respond to the transition period and what the federal government will do. In a press release on April 3rd, 2018, the ONLF laid out the reasons why it viewed the transition period with anxiety and distrust. The press release read:

ONLF position regarding the apparent change of leadership in Ethiopia

April 3, 2018

Yesterday, the Ethiopian EPRDF parliament has approved Abiy Ahmed to become the new prime minister of Ethiopia's autocratic regime. However, the Somali people and even the Ethiopian peoples

are skeptical of the current political moves by EPRDF to bring any meaningful change due to the culture and negative history of this party that is characterized by deceit, the hegemony of all political power and the use of violence and grave violation of human rights against its opponents. On many occasions, EPRDF has consistently misinformed both the people and the international community in order to divert attention from is grave transgressions and undemocratic rule, especially against the Somali people in the Ogaden.

Further, the Somali people, who were marginalized and brutally suppressed for almost a century since Ethiopia occupied the Ogaden, became a new victim for EPRDF which further committed acts tantamount to a genocide that surpassed the inhumane acts of all previous regimes and destroyed the dignity and livelihood of the Somali people. Hundreds of thousands were forcefully displaced internally and externally, thousands are languishing in temporary detention centers all over the Ogaden, thousands were summarily executed; close to one-third of Ogaden women were raped and humiliated, using rape as a weapon of war. Many were disabled or died through extensive tortures. Similarly, this alliance committed atrocities and denied all fundamental democratic rights to all peoples in Ethiopia, although not as grave as what happened in the Ogaden.

In addition, although all Ethiopian regimes including EPRDF claimed that Ogaden is part of Ethiopia, Somalis were never allowed into the inner circle of top Ethiopian leadership, had no say or input in the election of this new Prime Minister or all previous leadership hierarchy in Ethiopia, despite being the third largest nation and having the second largest territory which is almost one-third of Ethiopia or nominal regional Somali state.

> Despite all that, ONLF believes in resolving all conflicts through peaceful means and has on many occasions engaged with the regime in a negotiation process both bilaterally and with the participation of third parties but to no avail. Therefore, unless there is a genuine fundamental change in Ethiopia that addresses the age-old issue of the Somali people, in addition to the general lack of democracy in Ethiopia, a change at the helm of an autocratic regime will not bring any meaningful change to the Somali victims who suffered and are still suffering in EPRDF rule nor the multitudes in Ethiopia whose human and democratic rights had been violated. Unless the culture of violence and to address political grievances in Ethiopia is stopped, Ethiopia will always be the land of the living dead.
>
> Therefore, the Somali people in Ogaden will judge Abiy Ahmed by his actions and not by his polished rhetoric.
>
> Issued by Ogaden National Liberation Front
>
> April 3, 2018

At the federal level, Abiy Ahmed instituted several reforms aimed at addressing the discontent of the Ethiopian masses. One such reform led to the release of arrested Oromo leaders such as Bekele Gerba and un-banned political parties such as ONLF which the EPRDF considered to be 'terrorist' organization. On the other hand, relations between Addis Ababa and Jigjig'ss Iley soured. Spontaneous unrest in Jigjiga in August 2018 gave Addis Ababa an opening to remove Cabdi Iley from Office. President Mustafa Cumar (aka Mustafa Cagjar), the current president of the region, was selected by the regional parliament as an acting-president.

The combination of Iley's removal from office and Abiy's reform efforts unbanning political parties enabled the ONLF to change tact and pursue peaceful talks with Ethiopia anew. As part of goodwill and bridge-building, the ONLF unilaterally declared cessation of hostilities against Ethiopia and the end of its armed struggle on October 12, 2018. Its press release listed various reasons and read:

Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)
Declaration of Unilateral Ceasefire
12 August 2018

Considering the call for peace by the current Ethiopian government Leader Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed,

Considering the positive steps taken by the Ethiopian government to lay the groundwork for talks and peaceful negotiations to find an available and lasting solution to the Ogaden conflict

Cognizant of the dangers that can endanger the stability of the Ogaden and derail the proposed peace process,specifically any unilateral political or military decisions by all stakeholders

Affirming its commitment to engage in a peaceful negotiated settlement of the conflict

Stressing the key role ONLF and the Somalis in Ogaden in bringing peace, stability, and progress in the WiderHorn of Africa Region

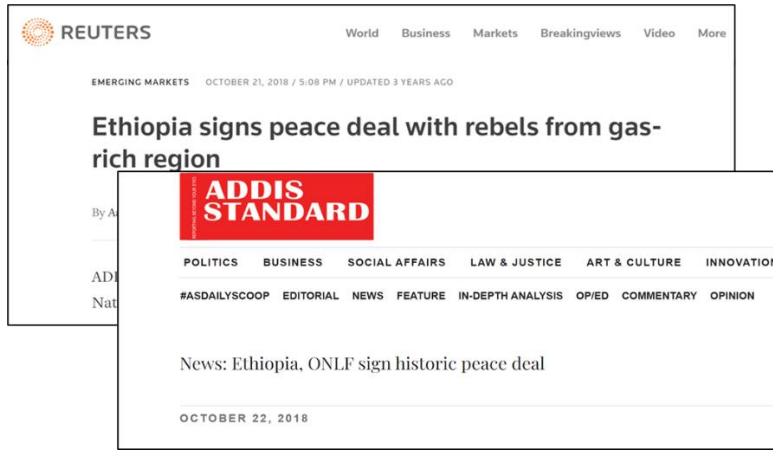
Emphasizing the urgent need to foster a climate of peace that can assist all ONLF, the Ethiopian governmentand other stakeholders in resolving the long-standing conflict in the Somali territory (Ogaden)

The Ogaden National Liberation Front **declares Unilateral ceasefire from today-** 12:00 pm, August 12, 2018,that and will cease all military and security operations directed against the Ethiopian Security Apparatus in the Somali territory (Ogaden), until negotiated comprehensive cessation of hostilities is reached with the Ethiopian government.

ONLF **calls upon** the Ethiopian government to reciprocate in kind in order to halt any further acts that couldhamper the initiated peace process and hasten the proposed peace talks.

Issued by the ONLF.

Nine days later, on October 21st, 2018, the ONLF and the Ethiopian government signed a historic peace deal in Asmara, Eritrea. Headlines all over the globe emphasized the "historic' nature of the peace accord.



The October ONLF-Ethiopian peace agreement made news worldwide and was splashed in newspapers across the globe.

Photo: ONLF and Ethiopian delegates in Asmara, Eritrea during their historic peace deal negotiations and signing event on Oct 21, 2018 (Photo from public domain, released for public consumption by negotiating parties).

At Asmara, Eritrea, President Mustafa Cumar, Minister Axmed Shide, Chairman Former ONLF Maxamed Cisman Cumar, Current ONLF Chairman Cabdiraxmaan Mahdi, and the ONLF Spokesman Cadaani Hirmooge shake hands after reaching peace agreement.

Somalis across the region, especially folks from the conflict-prone Ogaden areas, came out in scores to celebrate the peace deal and the ONLF finally coming home in peace. There was so much hope in the air and yearnings for a new beginning.

Over the course of thirty odd years, the ONLF waged a low-level insurgency that challenged Ethiopian military hegemony. As it tapped to long-held Somali views of Ethiopia in Somali territories, it was able to combine anti-colonial rhetoric as well as views presenting the dynamics of the 1990s Ethiopian politics to pursue its political agenda. The organization can be said to have been the standard-bearer of an indigenous Somali struggle against Ethiopia in the Somali region. That the ONLF ended its armed insurgency and shifted to pursue its political agenda within the context of the Ethiopian constitution which, at least in paper, permits the rights to self-determination, presents a fundamental change in the trajectory and the politics of the Somali region.

While the ONLF's 2018 peace deal with Ethiopia and its move towards unarmed political activism provides opportunities to peacefully solve the decades-old Somali region conflict, the creation of patronage-client relationship between Addis and Jigjiga muddies the waters. As noted by Peter Chonka and Sally Healy of King's College London, "*the federal order of Ethiopian politics means it will be as important to reach an accommodation with established political forces in Jigjiga as it was to reach a formal agreement with Addis*." Chonka and Healy further note, "*long standing center-periphery relations between Addis Ababa and Jigjiga will remain fundamental for articulations of Somali self-determination in the multiethnic Federal Ethiopian state*." It is therefore likely that the future of the Somali region from here onwards will be determined by Jigjiga more than the ONLF.

The 2018 ONLF-Ethiopia peace accord also raises a more fundamental question: Does the cessation of armed insurgency and the ONLF's presumed acceptance of the current federal Ethiopian constitution end the struggle for self-determination in the Ogaden? I think not. What it signals is a shift in the nature of the struggle and perhaps more towards "regional autonomy" within the broader Ethiopian context. A state within a state, so to speak. In the most recent history of the region, and ever since the patron-client relationship between Addis and Jigjiga established roots, self-determination became ambiguous. It is not clear if self-determination means obtaining full regional autonomy as in Twain, independence as in South Sudan or Darfur, or possible future amalgamation with a stabilized Somalia as the inhabitants of the region sought in 1950s. This lack of clarity in what the ONLF sought

lately, or what the current Somali region inhabitants want, adds a layer of complexity to the region's future political trajectory. However this plays out, there is no question a political reconfiguration and winds of change is in the air.

In the new political reconfiguration of the region, Jigjiga remains an obstacle to direct self-determination/independence. Most members of the Jigjiga administration view the region as part of Ethiopia. In essence, what the Jigjiga project ends is any lingering dreams of the idea of greater Somalia. As Chonk and Healy write:

> Across the Horn of Africa, questions of self-determination for Somali people outside the formal borders of the Somali state are no longer framed within a plausible Greater Somalia project. State-led irredentism reached its zenith with the Barre regime's brief occupation of the Ogaden in 1977... No doubt, popular sentiment towards Ethiopian control over the region remains deeply ambiguous and difficult to ascertain in the context of ongoing (and substantial) socio-economic change and hitherto firm state control of public discourse. As yet, no credible movement exists to practically rekindle pan-Somali mobilization against the Somali Regional State project led from Jigjiga.

While the trajectory of the Somali region remains murky, Ethiopia itself is undergoing uncertain period of transition. Despite promises of 'real change' that will right the ship in Ethiopian waters, the tale tales of central-authoritarianism, in a manner reminiscent of previous regimes, is omnipresent. Ethiopian politics and military strategies remain stagnant. Nation-states within the Ethiopian experiment appear to be drifting away from each other. Overall, there is a sense of, not sliding back to authoritarianism as in the past, but an end of Ethiopia as state.

In the view of this author, the current political crisis in Ethiopia point to inevitable balkanization. Like many multiethnic states composed of entities on the basis of ethnic configurations, Ethiopia is likely to dissolve. For Somalis, a peaceful dissolution of Ethiopia is the most likely route that will finally give them what they yearned for over a century: the right to self-rule and self-determination. The necessity of this step is further discussed in the next chapter.

11
2021 | On the Precipice

Note

Owing to the tumultuous events of the past year (2021) in Ethiopia, I composed few poetry lines to capture my flailing feelings of the moment. Things looked gloomy and TPLF was once again at the gates of Addis Ababa. The pendulum of the civil war has swung in favor of Addis while Mekelle dug deep, calming the waters down. But for the Somali, nothing seemed to have changed. I composed the lines in a poem I called "These tumultuous times of thy" on the spur of moment. I also wrote the following essay that was published in the World Peace blog managed by Alex De Wall. I thought it only appropriate to end the book with these thoughts that came out of the events of 2021. Once again, Ethiopia finds itself on the precipice

"I read it on a tablet
Heard the murmurs on SSTV
Voice of America broadcasted it wide
These tumultuous times of thy

...

The elder, the young, the scholar
On each other's throats.
"TPLF uprooted and on the run"
Said the elder.
Kombolcha fell
Dessie no more
"This regime is doomed,"
Said the younger.
Ethiopia as we knew it
"Rest in hell,"
Said the scholar
These tumultuous times of thy

An unyielding past,
Of which Abiyes and Abrahas,
Highlanders up from the north,
Fight over their fate
And I, a proud Somali
My destiny in their hands,
Iron class as ever,
Mouthed the words,
"init'ebiki'I ina iniyi"

....

These tumultuous times of thy
As thunderstorms gather over Jigjiga skies
You and I argue,
Uncertain and afraid
Huwan and Heego, we say
Isaaq and Cabdille, we mention
Cawar and Xasiid, we like
Ciise and Daawo, we forget

....

And so goes life in the Somali region
Identica, egale

What now for the Somali Region in Ethiopia?

The conflict in Ethiopia appears to have entered a new phase as forces loyal to Tigrayan rebels and their allies march towards the capital city, Addis Ababa. International efforts to broker peace between the warring parties and calls for a political solution have not borne fruit yet.

While the situation on the ground is very dynamic and fluid, given the failure of the Ethiopian national army to stop the advances of the Tigrayan forces thus far, the fall of Addis Ababa is a question of "when" rather than "if."

Not surprisingly, international diplomats and foreigners are leaving the country before things fall apart. The United States and

the United Kingdom regularly urge their citizens to leave Ethiopia, with reminders that their embassies are unlikely to be of any help in evacuating them in the event commercial options become unavailable.

Despite the escalating conflict, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed remains stubborn in his refusal to negotiate with the Tigrayan forces. His recent calls for a final stand to protect Addis Ababa from the advancing rebels reveals his intentions to stay on the course. The Tigrayans, on the other hand, are dead set on removing him from power. They see his departure as the only way to ensure their survival.

Given these dynamics of the conflict, there is a realistic possibility of multi-sided civil war and state collapse. While the humanitarian cost of such failure is very apparent, what it means for Ethiopia as we knew it is very clear: The end of the country may be near.

A bright spot in troubled waters

Despite the tumultuous events in the larger Ethiopia, the Somali region appears to be the one bright spot in this sordid affair. Over the last three years, the region enjoyed relative peace after the main opposition party, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), laid its weapons down, ending a 24-year long insurgency.

The current leadership has also taken praiseworthy steps. Under President Mustafa Omer, freedom of expression has improved considerably, the rate of arbitrary arrests decreased although not absent, and there is a considerable improvement in infrastructure such as roads, water wells, and the agriculture industry.

Despite the relative peace and progressive developmental agenda, much remains to be desired.

The special police forces, commonly known as the Liyu police, remains unreformed and a ragtag force. There has been no reform to speak of in the judicial branch or fighting corruption and nepotism. Most alarmingly, there is heightened intra-clan animosity to levels never seen before. The Somali-Afar conflict, one that has cost lives and resulted unimaginable destruction, remains unresolved. The last election held recently was nothing but a sham.

Most worryingly, the reform process in the Somali region was entirely sidestepped at the cost of advancing the Prosperity Party's (Abiy's party) political interests. The Somali Region leadership

unapologetically tied its political fortunes with those of Abiy's PP. Indeed, an open secret in the region is that where Abiy goes, so does the Somali regional leadership.

But what now?

Given the dynamics of the current conflict, the Somali question is interesting one.

The Somalis occupy a unique position in Ethiopia and hold a distinctive perspective on the current conflict. Being in Ethiopia but not of Ethiopia, to the average Somali the current war is essentially a war between Amharas and Tigrayans fighting over the fate of everyone else.

That perception among the Somalis is not without merit. Though Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state with various nations and nationalities, the Amharas have long dominated politics in Ethiopia and ruled it with iron fist until the Tigrayans came to power in 1991. Over the course of 27 years, the Tigrayans returned the favor and ruled Ethiopia through autocratic system that, despite guarantees in ethnic federal constitution, that generated new grievances. In 2018, that system had run its course and Abiy came to power.

Given their unique position in Ethiopia, it is understandable that the Somalis view the current conflict as part of a long list of conflicts in Ethiopia in which the Amharas and Tigrayans wrestled over who holds the central power over the peripheral nations.

However, a new understanding of Ethiopia is in the making. If the present conflict continues in its current trajectory, there will be no Ethiopia to speak of. The Tigrayans will likely insist on keeping the current constitution with its right of self-determination. The popular sentiment among ordinary Tigrayans is to exercise that right, which would likely lead to secession. Should that come to fruition, it will not be surprising to see a Yugoslavia-style dissolution of Ethiopia.

Multi-ethnic states have tendency to violently disintegrate when the center can no longer hold power as appears to be the case in Ethiopia. When one region breaks away, others will follow like dominoes. It is hard to imagine a scenario in which the Tigrayans opt for separation while the rest of Ethiopia remains intact. Much like Yugoslavia, without a peaceful dissolution a violent balkanization is a real likelihood. The consequence of such

fragmentation in Africa's second most populace country is indescribable.

The Somalis have long yearned to exercise the right to self-determination—not merely to have it as a paper right as was the case under the EPRDF system. That constitution appears to have been written to keep the Amharas down, the Somalis in, and the Oromos confused. The Somalis have suffered at the hands of Abyssinians for over hundred years. Their suffering under TPLF-ran Ethiopia is still too fresh to forget. It is time for them now to settle for nothing less than full self-determination.

The rest of Ethiopia can sort its problems the way they see it fit.

Chapter Notes

Much of the stories told in this book were based on archival sources and to some extent written materials of a secondary nature. I also relied on oral history of those who met eyewitnesses from the covered period. For example, Xaaji Maxamed Cabdi Yaasiin (Diirane) had met with Garaad Makhtal Garaad Daahir and his uncle Ugaas Cali Ugaas Yaasiin and recorded much of the stories told in Chapter 1 from the Somali perspective. In addition to the chapter notes shown below, a more complete and formal references can be found in the Select Bibliography section.

Introduction

The Ethiopian soldier's quotes can be found in the dairy of Captain R. B. Cobbold: Captain R.B. Cobbold's Diary of Anglo-Abyssinian Campaign of 1901, London, Ministry of Defense, Whitehall Library.

For those without direct library access, Charles L. Geshekter has extensively quoted Cobbold's diary. This can be found in: Geshekter, CL. (1985). Anti-colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950. The international Journal of African Historical Studies, 18 (1), pp 1–32. The excerpt from Charles L. Geshekter is also from this article, page 7.

Chapter 1. 1951 | Claiming a Land

The Menelik quotes in appear in several manuscripts and is widely published. For example, see: Silberman, L (1961). Why the Haud was ceded. In: *Cahiers d'etudes Africaines*, 2 (5), pp 37–83.

The House of Common's speeches by the British parliamentarians as well as their exchanges with various British Secretaries including those found in this chapter can be found publicly via a simple Google search. We are fortunate that much of these earlier documents are now publicly available. The British documents and parliamentarian speeches are mainly hosted at the following link:

https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/

These documents can also be found at:

https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/

I mainly found hardcopies of all the treaties through public search of my local library with search words such as "Ogaden, British Treaties," "Ogaden," "UK Parliamentary Papers." Such access does require institutional access or paying visit to your local library. As an academic, I was fortunate to have unfettered access to all the materials that are available through libraries; A comprehensive treatment of the 1897, 1944, and 1954 Anglo-Ethiopian treaties is provided by Louis Fitzgibbon in his 1982 *The Betrayal of Somalis* book. The full citation of the book is found in the select bibliography section. Louis also provided a detail of the Somali elders' appeals to the United Nations for amalgamate with other Somali territories and lists the various letters the elders wrote to the UN and the Four Powers.

Menelik's Circular Letter is published in its entirety in *The Betrayal of Somalis* by Louis Fitzgibbon.

Colonel Stacey's dispatches and correspondence are in the Public Record Office (PRO), London, "Stacey to Barring." They are also published widely in various manuscripts. For example, see Silberman L., 1961.

Captain R.B. Cobbold's Diary of Anglo-Abyssinian Campaign of 1901, London, Ministry of Defense, Whitehall Library: Again, for those without direct library access, see Charles L. Geshekter for extensive quots of Cobbold's diary. Geshekter, CL. (1985). Anti-colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950. The international Journal of African Historical Studies, 18 (1), pp 1–32.

Chapter 2. 1948 | A Protest Letter

For the House of Common's speech by the British parliamentarians, see the note above under the Introduction chapter.

To get hardcopies of all the Anglo-Ethiopian and the other treaties, see note above under the Introduction chapter.

For extensive quotes of Sealy correspondence to Barring, see Silberman, L (1961). Why the Haud was ceded. In: *Cahiers d'etudes Africaines*, 2 (5), pp 37–83

The quotes from Ambassador Axmed Maxamed Aden are from a letter he wrote on the 10th of March 1978 paper of the Daily Telegraph.

In a YouTube video, Xaaji Maxamed Cabdi Yaasiin (Diirane) provides a vivid account of the Kali meeting between the British and the Ogaden Somalis. Much of the History Xaaji Diirane recounts is supported by archival sources and written materials in second nature. Xaaji Diirane's video is titled "Taariikhdii Shirka Kali (Britain vs. Ogaden Somalis)." Last accessed December 12, 2021. (Direct link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a-SUm4wbHQ)

Chapter 3. 1951 | Forced Settlements in Tuli

For the Menelik comments/excerpts, see: Silberman, L (1961). Why the Haud was ceded. In: *Cahiers d'etudes Africaines*, 2 (5), pp 37–83.

The excerpts from Ronny Emmenegger are from his recent 2021 article: Emmenegger, R. (2021). Unsettling sovereignty: Violence, myths and the politics of history in the Ethiopian Somali metropolis. *Pol. Geo*, 90, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102476.

The excerpts from the historian Charles Geshekter are from his 1985 article: Geshekter, CL. (1985). Anti-colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950. The international Journal of African Historical Studies, 18 (1), pp 1–32

Tibebe Eshete's comments/exceprts are from his 1991 article in *Northeast African Studies* Journal. Full citation of the article can be found in the selected bibliography.

Chapter 4. 1957 | Public Lynching in Jigjiga

For Colonel A.T. Curle quotes, see Geshekter, CL. (1985). Anti-colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950. *The international Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18 (1), pp 1–32.

Hussein Abdullahi Bulhan published account of his lived experience and the events of 1957, of which I quoted here, in an article published by Horn of Africa journal. See, Bulhan, H. A. (1981). Partition of Land and Psyche in Somali Society. Horn of Africa, 111 (4), p16.

The comments/excerpts from the historian Cedric Barnes are from his 2007 article: Barnes. (2007). The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somali idea, c.1946–48. Journal of Eastern Africa Studies, 1 (2), pp 277–291

The comments/excerpts from the historian Charles Geshekter are from his 1985 article: Geshekter, CL. (1985). Anti-colonialism and Class Formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa Before 1950. The international Journal of African Historical Studies, 18 (1), pp 1–32

Tibebe Eshete's comments/exceprts are from his 1991 article in *Northeast African Studies* Journal. Full citation of the article can be found in the selected bibliography.

Chapter 5. 1960 | Mass Murder in Degahbur and Aisha [Ayshaca]

A documentary on Ayshaca massacre with survivors has been conducted by the Somali Region Satellite TV (SRTV). Eyewitness accounts of survivors can be found there. The video is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUVwHfU24ME

Cawaale Adan's song can also be found via simple search in YouTube with his name and the key word "Ayshaca."

The congratulatory message from US Secretary of State, Mr. Herter, is published as part of the State Department's press releases and is publicly available.

The excerpts from Louis Fitzgibbon are from his 1982 book, *The Betrayal of Somalis*.

Chapter 6. 1963 | Burnings in Hodayo

The comments/excerpts from historian Margery Perham are from her 1969 book, The Government of Ethiopia.

Garaad Makhtal Garaad Dahir's comments were published in 1964 NY Times article shown at the last page of the chapter.

The comments/excerpts from John Markakis are from his 2011 authoritative book, Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, N.Y)

The comments/excerpts from Tobias Hagmann are from his 2014 article: Hagmann, T. (2014). Punishing the Periphery: Legacies of State Repression in the Ethiopian Ogaden. Journal of Eastern Africa Studies, 8 (4), pp. 725–739.

Chapter 7. 2005 | Massacre in Kebridahar

Emperor Haile Selassie's speech in Qabridahar was published in the Ethiopia Observer, Vol I, Issue I, December 1956, pp 7. They are also quoted in both Geshekter's article and Markakis's 2011 book.

The interviews from Project Muse by Britta Radike and Tobe Levin were published in 2009 in Transition, Issue 100, pp. 78 – 111. The article is titled, "A Place to Call Home: Images and Interviews of Refugees from Ogaden."

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) excerpts are from the widely cited 2008 report: Human Rights Watch. 'Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State'. New York, 2008. (http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/06/11/collective-punishment)

Chapter 8. 2008 | Burnt Villages in Doolo

Mohamud H. Khalif and Martin Doornboss's comments/excerpts are from their 2002 article: Khalif, Mohamud Hussein and Martin Doornbos. 'The Somali Region in Ethiopia: A Neglected Human Rights Tragedy'. *Review of African Political Economy* 29 /91 (2002): 73–94.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) excerpts are from the widely cited 2008 report: Human Rights Watch. 'Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State'. New York, 2008. (http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/06/11/collective-punishment)

The comments from Tobias Hagmann are from his 2014 monologue: Hagmann, T. (2014). Talking Peace in the Ogaden: The Search for an End to Conflict in the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia. Pages 9 & 26. Rift Valley Institute | Nairobi Forum, Nairobi, Kenya.

Chapter 9. 2012 | Prelude to a Change

The comments from Tobias Hagmann are from his 2014 monologue: Hagmann, T. (2014). Talking Peace in the Ogaden: The Search for an End to Conflict in the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia. Pages 9 & 26. Rift Valley Institute | Nairobi Forum, Nairobi, Kenya.

The ONLF press statements were published in the organization's official website: http://onlf.org/?p=338. Unless taken down, one should be able to access the press releases there.

Chapter 10. 2018 | New Beginnings

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) excerpts are from the 2008 report: Human Rights Watch. 'Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State'. New York, 2008. (http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/06/11/collective-punishment)

The excerpts from Chonka and Healy are from their 2021 article, Chonka P & Healy S. (2021). Self-determination and a shattered star: Statehood and national identity in the Somali Horn of Africa. Nations and Nationalism, 27, 61–79.

The ONLF press statements were published in the organization's official website: http://onlf.org/?p=338. Unless taken down, one should be able to access the press releases there.

Chapter 11. 2021 | On the Precipice

My essay on "*What now for the Somali Region in Ethiopia*" was published on Nov 17, 2021, on the "Reinventing Peace" blog managed by Alex De Wal. The article can be found here: https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2021/11/17/what-now-for-the-somali-region-in-ethiopia/

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Dr. Abdirizak ("Abdi") Mohamed Warfa is a Minnesota-based author and professor of biological sciences at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, MN. A native of Somalia, after fleeing the civil war in his home country, his family settled in Denver, Colorado, but found the weather too different from the hot temperatures of East Africa. The family soon moved to San Diego, California, where he pursued his undergraduate studies before receiving his graduate degrees from the University of Washington Seattle and the University of Minnesota. Having lived in the Minneapolis area most of his live, he now calls Lakeville, Minnesota, home. Growing up during a tumultuous time in East Africa, Abdi has a long interest in understanding the history and politics of the region. He and his family frequently travel back to the Horn and call the Somali Region and Hargeisa in Somaliland home away from home.

History/African Studies/Somali Studies

"Fantastic book. Captures critical timelines, with historical references directly pointing to circumstances that shaped the Somali region's future."

— Sadiq Abdirahman, Somali-American writer and blogger

"Great work that fills a literature gap cynically created by non-Somalis."

— Dr. Nuur Hassan, author and East Africa political analyst

"A magnificent achievement... A masterpiece that narrates untold stories of the Somali region in easily relatable way."

— Amal Hussein, Hargeisa

"Well researched and informative!" — Ahmed Garane, Adjunct Professor, writer and Engineer

Over the past century, the story of the Somali region in Ethiopia has been one of conflict and war. Ever since Ethiopia's imperial governments (1890-1974) sought to annex large swaths of Somali territories, from Zeila to the Ogaden, the geographical term most often used to describe the present-day Somali region, successive Ethiopian regimes made their presence felt through coercive body politic. Based on archival sources, this phenomenal book chronicles untold stories of the Somali Region over the span of seventy years, from 1948–2018. Starting with the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty of 1897, it narrates key events and the lived experiences of Somalis in Ethiopia. The book is also intended to debunk stories told about the region that lack historical standing.

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